MIKE SHAYNE
MYSTERY MAGAZINE

AUGUST 1984

$1.75

47744

A New Mike Shayne Mystery
SHADOWS OF THE PAST
by Brett Halliday

Special Feature:
HOW CRIME
PLAYS
by Amy E. Dean

plus Short Stories
by Some Pretty
Good Writers!

0 71896 47744 0 8

"HE WAS AN OUTLAW...A KILLER...HIS LIFE WAS THE EPIC STORY OF A LAWLESS ERA!"

He was hunted, but he was human! And there was one—gentle yet dauntless—who flung her life away—into his arms!

The spectacular drama of the nation's most famous outlaw and the turbulent events that gave him to the world!

"Jesse, you're a hero now! But this will get into your blood! You'll turn into a killer and a wolf!"

"I know, but I hate the railroads, and when I hate, I have to do something about it!"

DARRYL F. ZANUCK'S
production of

JESSE JAMES

starring

TYRONE POWER
HENRY FONDA
NANCY KELLY
RANDOLPH SCOTT
and **HENRY HULL**
SLIM SUMMERVILLE
J. EDWARD BROMBERG
BRIAN DONLEVY
JOHN CARRADINE
DONALD MEEK
JOHN RUSSELL
JANE DARWELL

Directed by Henry King
Associate Producer and Original Screen Play by Nunnally Johnson
A 20th Century-Fox Picture

AUGUST 1984

VOLUME 48

NUMBER 8

ISSN 0026-3621

MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE

EDWARD GOLDSTEIN
ANITA GOLDSTEIN
Publishers

CHARLES E. FRITCH
Editor

ROBIN SCHAFFER
Art Director

LEO MARGULIES
Founder

SHADOWS OF THE PAST
by Brett Halliday
Spying on his friend Will Gentry was one of the toughest jobs Mike Shayne had ever had. It was a dirty job, but the way things were going it looked as though it was going to get a lot dirtier! 4

SHORT STORIES

LOSS OF A FACULTY
Peter A. Sellers 53
SPIDERS
Buzz Dixon 69
WITH EXTREME PREJUDICE
Michael Bracken 83
THE BUS BANDITS
Ray Bradley 92
BIRD BANK BINGO
Arthur Moore 100
FIRST SECURITY
Lane Marsh 104
TO FORGIVE IS HUMAN
Mel Washburn 110
THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE DEAD-DRUNK DRIVER
Richard E. Givan 115
KNIT LADY
Ardath Mayhar 119
THE PRISON LETTERS
Vicki Shaull Carleton 122

FEATURES

HOW CRIME PLAYS (article)
Amy E. Dean 40

MIKE'S MAIL (Letters from Readers) 126

MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE, Vol. 48, No. 8, August 1984. Published monthly by Renown Publications, Inc., 18309 Sherman Way, Suite C, Reseda, CA 91335. Subscription. One Year (12 issues) $18.00; Two Years (24 issues) $32.00; Canada, One Year $21.00; Two years $38.00; Foreign, One Year $24.00; Two years $40.00 (U.S. Funds Only). Second Class postage paid at Reseda, CA and at additional mailing offices. Events and characters in this magazine are wholly fictitious. Copyright © 1984 by Renown Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. Protection secured under the International and Pan-American Conventions. Printed in the United States of America. Postmaster— return P.O. Box 178, Reseda, CA 91335.

Mike Shayne couldn't believe his eyes. His old friend Will Gentry was doing something the detective never thought the police chief would be doing. Worse, Shayne hated himself for what he*'d have to do, now that he'd found out!*

Shadows of the Past

by BRETT HALLIDAY

THE BLONDE ROSE OUT OF THE SEA LIKE A LEAPING DOLphin, then settled down on the calming surface without the slightest loss of balance. Her single ski razoring the bay water, she smiled toward the shore and waved.

A bulk of a man in a yellow shirt sitting beneath the BHYC, blue and white umbrella caught her smile, the long, black cigar falling out of his mouth in the process. While one hand groped for the stogie beneath the table, the other, beefy and white, signaled back in great animation.

The blonde held up one finger as the boat pulling her turned for one more pass at the jump. The surf splashed toward shore, catching more than one couple lined along the yacht club's outdoor dining area. A white-haired man in a white ascot and double-breasted, navy-blue jacket stood up abruptly and shook his fist. The bulky figure, preoccupied with the water skier, didn't seem to notice.

The April sun had dropped from its zenith, but the temperatures still hovered in the high eighties. It was the time of year in Miami when the tourists and snowbirds had thinned out and the natives had recaptured their city. It was Saturday when most of the population welcomed the opportunity to flee air-conditioned offices and tight-fitting suits.

The bulky man motioned a blue-jacketed waiter to his table. "I want this refilled with your best scotch, and the moment that young lady sits down I want you hovering nearby to take our order." He handed the waiter a five-dollar bill.

"Yes, sir," he said with a wide grin that extended out into Biscayne Bay.

"And make sure you've put that grin in mothballs by the next time you show your butt around here—got it?"

Without answering, the waiter walked toward the bar. He leaned

© 1984 by Brett Halliday

against it beside a younger waiter who was taking a five-minute break before the early supper crowd showed.

The older waiter said, "Here it comes, the worst time to work."

"Know what you mean," answered the younger waiter without looking up from his half-smoked cigarette. "Geezer and biddy hour ain't exactly Miller time. They demand lots of service . . ."

"And demand it promptly."

"Then they tip—in change. Crap, I got an old broad like that at table six right now."

Without even bothering to look to the shadows and the table farthest away from the water, the older waiter bummed a cigarette. "See that guy on the edge of the wharf, the one in the white slacks and yellow shirt?"

"Yeah," said the younger waiter as he glanced up.

"I never laid eyes on him till a week ago. Since then, every night he shows up at about four o'clock."

"So?"

"How old do you think he is?"

"Fifty, give or take a few years," said the younger, noting the beefy body, the heavy thighs, the graying hair, and the fleshy stomach that had pulled the polo shirt loose in front.

"Exactly. You know who he meets here every night?"

"His wife."

"I doubt it. The only ring's on his nose, not her finger." The older waiter looked toward the bay.

"Miss Cypress Gardens? I don't believe it. She could ski in my pond any day." The younger waiter stubbed out his cigarette and stepped back into the harsh light. The late-afternoon sun glared off the water, and he shaded his eyes. The sensual smile on his face registered his appreciation of her.

The older waiter walked over and put his arm around his friend's shoulder. "Ah, to be a few years younger."

"Why?"

"I don't know. I forget."

They both laughed. Suddenly the younger waiter's jaw dropped. "My God!"

As the blonde took off from the same jump, her rear foot popped loose from the ski. She began to turn sideways.

She hit the water almost backwards, her neck striking the waves first.

The boat's driver kept on going without looking back.

The older man in the white slacks and yellow shirt was running down the wharf. As he reached the boat dock, a fisherman with a 50-horse

Evinrude on the rear of his Wellcraft was just shutting off his motor. With speed that belied his size, the older man leapt aboard. "The jump. Head for it," he shouted. "There's a girl in trouble out there."

The wharf was lined with people, most clutching a drink, as the fifteen footer shot forward.

The boat that had been towing the blonde started to turn.

"Slow down," shouted the yellow-shirted figure to the fisherman. "You don't want to hurt her. That's right—a little more starboard. O.K., cut it."

Her eyelids were closed, but the orange lifejacket kept her head bobbing above the water like a buoy. The older man reached over the side of the boat, grasped her under the armpits, and lifted her in.

Her eyelids fluttered, and she gasped for air.

"How is she?" asked the fisherman.

"Too soon to tell, but I think she just had the wind knocked out of her."

The craft maneuvered back to the Bal Harbour Yacht Club dock. By the time it reached the wharf, the blonde's eyes opened. The older man helped her up a ladder and onto the dock.

They walked toward the table he had been sitting at, his arm supporting her as they moved. "You got to be more careful. I mean, hell, you just started taking lessons last week," the man said.

"I know," she said throwing her arms around his neck and pulling him closer, "but I've had the greatest teacher."

The man in white and yellow smiled broadly and absorbed her shivering body.

The younger waiter handed a glass of white wine to a silver-haired woman in a blue dress and sunglasses. "Good thing the old guy was around," he commented.

She placed a large bill on the table and stood up. "I don't know," she said. "You'd think Miami's Chief of Police would have a big enough force so that he wouldn't have to spend his time personally rescuing young ladies in distress."

The young waiter scooped up the large tip. "You got a point there, a real point, Miss."

As the waiter departed, she muttered, "It's *Mrs.* Mrs. Will Gentry."

II

SOMEWHERE VERY NEAR A CHURCH BELL TOLLED ITS timeless message. Mike Shayne took out a handkerchief and wiped his sweating brow. He was sitting in a yellow, wrought-iron chiar that the summer sun had heated like a griddle. A chameleon darted out from

behind a flower pot and so blended against a philodendron as to become invisible. The big detective envied it.

The redhead studied the white-haired woman who was circling a meticulously sculpted birdbath. She had a grandeur about her much like her Bal Harbour home. Shayne tugged on his collar, wishing he hadn't worn a tie. Hell, that wasn't the cause of his uneasiness.

What bothered him most, he admitted, was a feeling akin to betrayal.

"Raoul will bring the tea momentarily," she announced. "I appreciate your coming, especially . . . especially on such short notice. No, what I mean is, I appreciate your coming especially since you and I have disliked each other for a long time now."

Uncomfortable in the hot present, Shayne was thinking about how his morning had begun on the cool beach. He had risen early so that he could be fishing for the hour before and after high tide, the best possible time. Something in his bones had told him this was the day he would hook that big but elusive pompano. He kept casting his bait into the calm surf, each time extending his consciousness down the seven-foot graphite shaft, beyond the fifteen-pound test line, feeling for the slightest tremor.

When the fish hit, Shayne had been totally aware—his self reposed at the end of the line. He struck, knowing with instant surety the pompano was hooked. The custom-made Orvis rod bent till it resembled an arch, and the Shakespeare reel whined in its labor. Slowly the redhead turned the reel, always keeping the tip up. Primal. Him against a proud product of nature. Completely alive, already tasting the juicy fish he would cook in a paper bag the way the French did.

Closer. He caught a fleeting glimpse of his quarry just below the opaque surface. A seven-pound pompano if it weighed an ounce. Still closer. He waded deeper into the surf as his sinewy muscles turned the reel. The sea, the sun, the fish, his body—they all spoke a common language.

"Michael, Michael."

He turned. Running down the deserted beach in a pink sweatsuit was his beautiful secretary, Lucy Hamilton.

"Oh, Michael," exclaimed the breathless brunette, "I'm so glad I found you. I finally remembered what you told me last night you were going to be doing this morning. She's been calling me every five minutes."

"Who?"

The rod went limp in the redhead's sore hands. His intense concentration and the pompano had vanished.

Mrs. Gentry handed a fragile china cup to the detective. "Please," she said, "don't make this any harder than it is."

"I don't know what to say," admitted Shayne, returning to the present.

She turned her back to him. "What do you think of this garden?"

The redhead surveyed the various flowers, shrubs, and herbs that covered almost the entire walled-in backyard. More than a mammoth undertaking, with its mix of color and balance, it seemed to him close to a work of art. It struck him that almost every time he had been to this house to see his good friend Will Gentry they had gone to the cop's study, and in truth the detective hadn't even known this portion of the grounds existed.

"When Will and I first moved here," she continued, "we both worked on it. See that grapefruit tree in the center? It was the first thing we planted together. Will always said it should have been an apple. In any case, it was almost the last thing we did together. From that point Will had his work, and I was expected to sit at home, to look beautiful while he did his ugly job. So I built this lovely garden around me, like a cocoon." She paused. "I know you are not fond of tea, but today is Sunday, and that imbibement you and my husband prefer is so . . . well, uncivilized."

"Where is Will, Mrs. Gentry?" Even as he said it, Shayne realized that in the fifteen or so years he had been friends with the Gentrys, he had never learned her first name.

"At church . . . I think. Our custom has been to attend every Sunday, but today I begged off with a splitting headache."

Shayne could sense her pain, but he doubted its cause was a headache. "Why was it so urgent for you to see me?"

"You must first understand that I do not detest you personally, just what you represent." She poured a cup from the silver service. "Have you ever seen *Hedda Gabler?* No, of course not. Well, at one point in the play a very bored housewife says, 'I loathe anything ugly.' Frankly, what you and my husband do, for lack of a better word, is just plain ugly."

The redhead knew it was no time to get into a philosophic discussion about the nature of his work and evil. Besides, it was her garden, and it was beginning to look like somebody had poisoned her apple. "This all has to do with Will, then?"

"My husband and I have always loved each other, in our fashion, but we have never been as . . . close as some couples. Perhaps that's why we've never had progeny. We come from two different backgrounds and possess two different outlooks. He has his guns and

criminals—I, my flowers and garden parties. An earlier time might have referred to it as a marriage of convenience."

At the moment Shayne felt more like a priest than a detective. What she had just confessed to him must have been very difficult for her to say.

"For the past few weeks," she added, "Will and I have been further apart than ever. Miles have become light years, and he won't even talk to me about it. Recently I found a Bal Harbour Yacht Club book of matches on his dresser, and you know he only goes there to fish, not to enjoy the clubhouse. In your business you would conclude that a sudden shift in a behavioral pattern usually indicates something, would you not?"

Shayne nodded and shifted his head so that he was in the shade.

"Yesterday I did something I detest." Her cup began to jiggle and she set it down. "I followed my husband to the Club. I thought that maybe we could talk there—on neutral grounds, so to speak, and perhaps resume things the way they had been. Frankly, I am very lonely, but yesterday I discovered the meaning of solitude. I was sitting there in the shadows, reaching out for him, and as I watched, my husband reached out . . . to a blonde he was with."

Shayne was taken back. Will Gentry with another woman. The thing was impossible. In all the years he had known Will, in all the time he had watched his friend crawl up the ranks from Chief of Detectives to Chief of Police, Will Gentry had been faithful. "Are you sure?"

"Absolutely!" Her hands clenched, she stood up and advanced toward him.

"What do you want from me, Mrs. Gentry?" asked the detective.

The pride fought the pain for control of her dull eyes. "That's simple, Mr. Shayne. I want my husband back."

III

THE GUARD AT THE ENTRANCE, HAVING SEEN THE RAW-boned investigator with Will Gentry many times, waved Shayne into the BHYC. The entire drive to the Club, the redhead had been puzzled—first by Will's alleged behavior and secondly by Mrs. Gentry's request.

What exactly did she want from him? Did she just want what she suspected verified? Did she want him to confront Will with what she knew? Did she want him to use his friendship with the police chief to get him back for her? Did she want him to discover who the blonde was? Or, was she implying the unlikely—she wanted him to get the girl out of the way?

The detective finally had had to conclude he didn't know the silver-haired woman well enough to be able to figure her intentions. Maybe she wasn't even sure what she wanted, he told himself.

As he stepped into the mid-morning sun, the blue and white pennants flapped overhead in the bay breeze like a flock of sleepy gulls. Gentlemen in white slacks and blue jackets and women in summer dresses and shiny jewelry promenaded through the palm-filtered sunlight in a pre-brunch ritual.

Shayne would have felt out of place even if it weren't for the case he was on. No, "case" was the wrong word. This time Lucy would never open a manila folder—this one had PERSONAL stamped across it. He had always been hesitant about taking on jobs involving snooping on private relationships, so why, he asked himself, was he doing it? To spy on a friend ran even more counter to his grain. Maybe it was because he knew in the end the truth would confirm what he had always known about his friend. Will Gentry was sometimes gruff, hardnosed, occasionally even violent, but he was always faithful to those he cared about.

Half an hour later a few discreet questions had brought him nothing other than the obvious—Will was somewhere on the grounds. If the redhead didn't miss his guess, that meant near the water.

He walked down the tar path to the docks. To the right sat the big boats with laughing men and women in full party. To the left the empty slips suggested that the fishing boats had long since departed for tranquil Sunday waters.

At the end of a weathered pier, Shayne spotted a solitary couple. The man was of medium height but heavy. His burly right arm extended around her terry-cloth jacket. Her short blonde hair blowing across her deeply tanned face, she was tall and slender. She was also young—very young.

The couple was laughing and tossing something at a group of leafy herons that had perched on the pilings at the pier's end. They looked like a picture in a travel brochure—"Come to Bal Harbour where the here 'n now is better than the hereafter."

Mrs. Gentry was right. If he hadn't seen it with his own eyes, Shayne knew he would never have believed it.

But there was his friend of so many years taking the blonde's hands in his and swinging her joyously around as if they were the only people in paradise.

Shayne began to wonder if you could ever really get to know anyone. For as long as he had been in Miami, Will Gentry had passed for a close friend. He was the kind of man who always kept an even keel, whose

only emotion was an occasional display of anger.

Now Shayne was staring at a Chief of Police he had never suspected existed. Up until now in dealing with Miami's hookers, strongarms, and con men, Will had had only one passion—for the blind lady holding the scales.

THE BIG REDHEAD DIDN'T LIKE HIMSELF FOR WHAT HE did the remainder of the afternoon. Sometimes he propped himself against a coconut palm; others he put a group of people between him and the April-October couple. Finally as the sun perched atop a distant Miami, they started to part.

They seemed to be in the midst of an argument just to the side of the mammoth, stuccoed clubhouse. Suddenly she waved at a waiting cab, and against Gentry's obvious protests, jumped in. The bulldog cop threw some bills at the driver and through the window continued to argue with her.

Shayne had an urge to run up to his friend and say, "Will, we've always been above board with each other—what the hell's going on?" Instead he made an instant decision and bolted for the Buick. If he weren't going to confront his friend, there was only one other avenue to the truth—the blonde.

The redhead followed the cab down Collins. There was just enough traffic to hide him, yet not enough so that he would lose her. The taxi turned into the low-rent district and stopped at The Jolly Beachcomber. He watched as she walked up the stairs to the second floor of the cheap motel and into room 215.

Shayne parked the Buick down the street, all the while keeping her room in sight. He wasn't sure what he was looking for, but no one went in or came out. He decided to check and walked into a small, glassed-in room labelled with an unlit neon sign OFFICE. A middle-aged man in a wrinkled Hawaiian shirt and seersucker pants looked up from Miss June. "By the day or the hour, mac?"

"Neither," said the redhead. "I need to look at your register."

"This ain't no library, mac."

Shayne discreetly covered the airbrushed brunette with a ten.

The manager flipped open the book. Beside her room Shayne found her name. "What do you know about Lorie Rollins in 215?" he asked.

"Do I look like a reference librarian, mac?"

Shayne dealt the man another ten.

"I know as much about her as I do any of the other people checked into this dump," said the manager. "I just punch the clock and take people's money." Like a hungry heron he reached for the bill.

Shayne snatched his bait back first. "Do I look like a philanthropist, pal?" Realizing the manager had nothing more to offer, the redhead strolled out the door and back to the Buick. No sooner had he torched a Camel than she emerged in a tube-top and short-shorts. She lit a cigarette and looked suddenly older.

She ambled past him and continued down the street. Shayne followed. When she turned into the Fishnet Bar & Grill, he drove past, then walked back. She was sitting alone in a dimly-lit corner drinking a headless beer. The redhead sat down at the bar so he could see her reflection in the mirror.

Shayne was on his second draft and the jukebox was on its third play of some country song "Sleeping Alone With You" when she looked up from her drink. A short guy in a black silk shirt, slicked-back hair, and sunglasses strutted up to her table. She stood up, threw her arms around him, and kissed him fully on the mouth.

Arm and arm they started across the linoleum floor. As they passed, the big detective heard her say, "Perfect. Everything is going just according to plan."

IV

SHAYNE TOOK THE STAIRS UP TO WILL GENTRY'S OFFICE early Monday morning. He was in no hurry to get there.

He had left the girl's motel when the lights in Room 215 went out around 11:00 the night before. Lorie and her dancing partner had sashayed out once for a bucket of chicken and Cokes, then had spent the evening in. Shayne didn't really know why he had watched the motel at all—maybe he had hoped some explanation, other than the obvious, would surface.

It hadn't.

"Hello, Janine," the detective said to Gentry's henna-haired secretary, noting she had changed color again. Unfortunately the outer room was empty, and he wouldn't have to wait. "The boss in?"

"Hi, Mike," she purred. "How about my buying you that drink when I get off this afternoon?"

"I'll have to take a raincheck, honey."

"Gee, Mike, it'd take a month of dry weather for you to use up all the rainchecks I've had to give you."

As Shayne walked past the bosomy secretary, he decided that if Janine unbuttoned her blouse any lower, Gentry would have a riot in the office.

Gentry didn't seem to notice the redhead's entrance. Usually the burly cop was buried under paperwork and cigar smoke, but today he

stood before the opened window staring blankly across the city.

"Will," Shayne said.

The chief jerked around. "Oh, it's you, Mike."

"Glad I caught you on one of those rare occasions when you're not busy."

"Not busy, hell. I've got a city that's trying its best to stay number one on the homicide hit parade, what seems like half my manpower deciding to take a three-day weekend, and the new city manager chews on my butt every morning for breakfast."

"Oh, Cameron, the media darling from Philadelphia. That guy gets more TV coverage than the opening of the Dolphins' training camp." Shayne sat down in a straightback chair. He pulled over Gentry's conch-shell ashtray and lit a Camel. "What's the Philly flash on you about?"

Gentry bit off the tip of a carnival-sized cigar. "First, I'm a dinosaur, and you know how new management always brings in its own team. Crap!" He spat out the black plug of tobacco.

"That's a lot of extra pressure, Will," said Shayne.

"You're telling me." Gentry lit up the foul-smelling stogie.

"How's your wife taking it?"

"What made you bring Mrs. Gentry up?"

"I don't know. I guess I thought that if things were tough down here, well, you might take it home with you."

"Mrs. Gentry doesn't even like for me to bring my briefcase home. For her, business and home life don't mix." He drew hard on the Havana. "What brings you down here?" he said abruptly. "What favor do you need this time?" He turned his back and walked to the window.

Shayne reacted to the out-of-character comment. "Didn't it ever occur to you that I might sometimes just drop by to touch base with an old friend?" The redhead caught himself. "Look, Will, is there something I can help you with?"

Gentry whipped around. "There's nothing wrong with me. What made you say that?"

"We've been friends long enough that I can tell when something's eating at you and it's not more homicides, blue flu, or some hotshot public official."

"If I want your help, Dr. Shayne," said the police chief, jabbing the cigar in the redhead's direction, "I'll call for an appointment. In the meantime I'm busy."

The big detective stood up and stubbed out the Camel. "Is there something you've been working on that you can't talk about?"

"Damn it, Shayne!" Gentry barked. "I don't have time to stand around and gab with you like a couple of old ladies. So if you aren't here on business, get out."

Shayne watched his friend's face grow red. He had known Will long enough to realize this was not the time to press the issue, not when a raw nerve stood exposed.

The intercom buzzed. It was Janine. "Sir, there's a representative from the City Manager's Office out here who says he has to see you immediately."

Gentry rammed the cigar into the ashtray beside Shayne. "Damn it to hell, that's all I need this morning. First I get the third degree from a nosey private eye. Then one of Cameron's flunkies shows up to remind me of the latest dedication or ribbon-cutting that the City Manager thinks his Police Chief ought to attend."

"Take it easy, Will," said Shayne.

"That image-conscious butthook won't be satisfied until he has a chief who's really with it. I bet I'd measure up better if I drove a fancy foreign sports car and squired around a young blonde."

V

THE MID-MORNING SUN STARED IN SHAYNE'S FACE AS HE crossed the Tuttle Causeway back to Miami Beach. For the second time in two days, a fishing trip had come up empty. To push Will Gentry any further would have meant letting on to what he knew, and it was obvious his old friend wasn't going to talk about the girl. Still, his last remark puzzled the redhead.

Another thing stuck in the big detective's craw—Lori Rollins' words that "Everything is going according to plan." What was the plan? Who was she really and who was her male companion? More importantly, how did Will Gentry fit in? When he had first spotted her Sunday afternoon, he'd have said she was in love with the cop, but when he had seen her later that day at the bar with her polyester playmate, it had looked more like the classic scam.

She was the bait and Will the eager fish. Wouldn't Miami's new city manager just love it if his out-of-date police chief were caught in some hot-sheet motel in the adulterous arms of a blonde half his age.

By the time Shayne parked outside The Jolly Beachcomber, he had decided to confront her. Sure, it might make powerful waves if by some remote chance the whole thing turned out on the up and up as well as if Will found out he had been there questioning her, but if it were a con, he could save his friend a lot of pain and a lot more.

For that the big redhead was willing to take the chance.

Shayne knocked on 215. No reply. He knocked again. Nothing.

His nostrils caught a familiar odor.

Gas.

Without much effort his shoulder took out the cheap luan door.

A snake-like hiss greeted him.

In the corner of the motel room was an old-fashioned, unvented spaceheater.

Lying on the bed was a motionless Lorie Rollins.

THE HOSPITAL E.R. REEKED OF AMMONIAC ANTISEPTICS. Shayne had been in amusement-park bumper-car rides with less chaos, but it didn't take the redhead long to realize the E.M.T.'s knew exactly what they were doing.

He had ridden with the paramedics to the hospital. The whole time they had tried to bring her around. They had placed a mask over her face and attached her to a battery of beeping monitors. Now a green curtain separated him from her, but what separated her from the long sleep he wasn't sure.

The E.M.T.'s and the E.R. nurse had asked him a few questions, but other than her name he had had nothing to tell them. When the doctor had insisted he leave the treatment room, he had called Will from a hall payphone, told him where he was, and said simply, "You'd better get over here—immediately."

Shayne started to light a cigarette, then noticed the NO SMOKING sign. He sat down in a vinyl and chrome chair. Nothing made sense. The redhead was fairly certain the girl was involved in a con game aimed at his friend. Why, then, if, as she had said, everything were going according to plan, why would she turn on the gas?

The E.R. double doors flew open, and a sweat-drenched Will Gentry poured in. "This better be good," he growled, an unlit cigar clenched between his teeth. "Why in hell did you call me across the bay?"

"Follow me," said the redhead. "There's something you'd better see."

Shayne led him down the corridor toward the closed curtain. A nurse in a green sweater stopped them. 'You gentlemen aren't allowed in here."

Shayne disregarded her and pointed through the parted curtain. The young blonde lay inert, her visage vacant and lifeless.

The cigar dropped tc the floor, and Shayne could see his friend's face was as pale as a New Jersey secretary's leg its first day on the beach.

"My God," exclaimed Gentry. "No!"

"Easy, Will," said Shayne, restraining his friend.

"Sirs," said the nurse, "you'll have to leave or I'll call security."

The detective ushered his friend back to the row of chairs. Slowly Gentry melted into the vinyl.

"Not Lorie," said the burly cop. "Not now, not after all this time."

"They're doing all they can," said Shayne, realizing instantly how dumb it sounded.

Gentry raised his slumped head. His eyes were moist and streaked with red. After awhile he said, "How did you know about Lorie and me?"

"That doesn't matter now, old friend."

"Did she have anything to do with your dropping by my office this morning?"

"Well . . . yes."

"How did you know?"

The redhead tugged at his earlobe. "I saw you two together at the yacht club."

"Oh."

"Listen," said Shayne, "it's none of my business who you're seeing or what you're doing, but if you want to talk about it?"

Gentry sat straight up. "Good God, Mike, you don't think that Lorie and I . . .

"Well, what else . . . "

"Damn it, Mike! That unconscious girl in there. She's, she's . . . my daughter."

VI

SHAYNE STILL COULDN'T BELIEVE IT. IN THE HALF HOUR since Gentry had dropped his bombshell, the doctors had moved the still-unconscious girl up to Intensive Care. She wasn't totally out of danger, but her condition had stabilized.

The redhead handed Gentry a styrofoam cup of coffee and sat down beside his friend.

Both sipped silently at the foot of her bed.

Finally, Shayne looked Gentry in the eyes. "Believe me, Will, I had no idea . . . "

"It's O.K., Mike. There's no way you could have known. Hell, I didn't even find out until a couple of weeks ago."

"In all the years we've known each other, you've never mentioned word one about a previous marriage."

"That's because there wasn't one."

Shayne swirled the oily coffee in the stained cup. "You want to talk about it now?"

Restlessly Gentry pulled a cigar out of his pocket, then put it back. His dark eyes seemed to the redhead to coexist in two worlds—one here and one long ago.

"Back before you came to town," began Gentry, "I was a young detective who wasn't going to be satisfied till my gold shield read CHIEF. I volunteered for a lot of O.T. Caught a lot of cases nobody else would touch—anything to get an edge with the promotion board. Aw hell, you don't want to hear this."

"I can probably have lunch with the President next week," said Shayne with a wide smile.

Will smiled back. "Maybe my ambition was one reason Mrs. Gentry and I were already starting to lead separate lives. Maybe it was that she came from old money and me from none. Maybe it was her family never being able to understand why I wanted to be a cop. Sometimes I can't figure why she married me in the first place. You ever heard of Johnny Steppe?"

Shayne rasped his thumbnail across his chin. "Wasn't he the guy who ran the rackets a few years back?"

"Yeah, only he's retired now."

"What's a has-been racketeer got to do with your daughter?"

"Back then Steppe ran his operation out of a little place on the beach, the Club Francais, but there was nothing little about his operation—drugs, women, numbers, the whole shebang. He had city hall and it was rumored even some of the Feds in his vest pocket. Whatever Johnny wanted, Johnny got. Yeah, he had it all going his way till he made a big mistake."

"What kind?"

"Steppe fancied himself a ladies man. Chased every skirt that ever worked for him. One of these he singled out was Aimee Devreaux, a young singer who wowed the dinner crowd. Steppe took her everywhere. Trusted her completely, even when he was doing his dirty work. When she finally caught on to what kind of business he was in, she tried to break it off. Course Steppe said no. To make his point he even roughed her up."

"Hell hath no fury like a woman scarred."

"One April night we picked him up for killing Weasel Emery, a small-time paper-hanger. Well, while the cat was away, the mouse saw a chance to escape. She offered to testify against Steppe in return for protection."

"A dirty job no cop wanted," said the redhead.

"Except an ambitious police lieutenant who figured the best way to keep her alive till the trial was to get her out of town." Gentry had lost

track of the present. "Aimee Devreaux was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen."

"Where'd you hide her?"

"Since the department was paying, I picked the last place anybody's ever look for a prosecution witness, Bermuda. We flew over one night and registered in this little pink cottage as Mr. and Mrs. William Johnson. I could tell you how we spent eleven days climbing lighthouses, riding motorbikes, learning to play tennis, but all I really need to say is the obvious. Like any two unfulfilled people thrown together intimately in paradise, we fell in love."

"What about Mrs. Gentry?"

"Like I said, things were pretty ragged between us then. I think she was happier at her flower shows and bridge games not having to make excuses for me. In her filet mignon world, I was a raw hotdog."

"Lorie Rollins is your daughter by Aimee Devreaux," said Shayne.

"The hell of it is I didn't even know it. Eleven days, Mike. Eleven days was all we had together, all we knew we'd ever had. After her testimony Steppe was put away, but Aimee disappeared into one of those witness relocation programs—forever. I'll never forget the last thing she ever said to me, the words of a song she used to sing—'Moins la memoire, plus le souvenir.' The less the memory, the more the remembrance. 'I wish we had longer,' I said to her. She put her finger on my lips. 'We'll always have le souvenir.' "

Shayne could feel the conflicting emotions running through his friend.

"You know," continued Gentry, "the pain of losing Aimee was bad enough, but then to find out you have a daughter, the only child you've ever had, and you didn't get to spend twenty years with her. I was working in the office late one day last month when this skinny girl in bluejeans walked in like some leftover from Spring Break. Very calmly she announced she had just flown in from Georgia and she was my daughter."

"How did you react?"

"How in hell do you think I reacted? How would you feel if some girl you'd never seen before walked into your Flagler Street pit and claimed you were her father? I thought at first someone in the office was playing a joke."

"What changed your mind?"

"This."

From the police chief Shayne took a photograph. It was a black and white of a younger Will standing beside a cottage with a blonde who bore a striking resemblance to the unconscious girl.

Gentry said, "The gardener took it for us just as we were getting ready to leave the island."

"Couldn't somebody have gotten hold of it to convince you of the girl's story?"

"Maybe, but not this." He held up a fat envelope.

"What's that?"

"It's a letter to me written about twenty years ago. In it Aimee tells me all about our daughter."

"There's no stamp on it."

"Aimee never mailed it. A month ago she lay dying, but before she passed on she told Lorie the truth, the whole story about Bermuda. Then she explained to her daughter who her father was and gave her these two things."

"And Lorie came to look for you."

"Yes. Aimee had no living relatives and few friends in her new location. When she died, I was the only remaining family."

"How did she react at seeing you?"

Gentry looked protectively at the unconscious girl. "Happy. Glad after all these years she finally had found the missing part to her family."

Shayne studied his friend. "Will, if you were really in love with Aimee, why didn't you go after her? A guy in your position could have found out where she was."

"You don't know how many times I asked myself the same thing. I had my job, I had a wife, and together we had a comfortable life. Then, too, if I had tried to find Aimee, I told myself I'd endanger her. So twenty years ago I decided not to try, to make a clean break."

"Have you told Mrs. Gentry about your daughter?"

The agonizing police chief looked away. "That's been the hardest part. To tell her about my daughter would be to admit our whole marriage has been a lie."

"So you haven't said a thing."

The cop shook his head affirmatively.

"You know you'll have to sooner or later."

Gentry looked back at Shayne. "You don't think she already knows, do you?"

Shayne wondered if the perceptive policeman suspected anything from the detective's early-morning visit to the station. Could Gentry have sensed, have found out his wife was the reason for all the questions? "How could she," the redhead finally answered, "know anything about your daughter?"

Gentry paused. "Mike, Lorie and I were really hitting it off. I can't

remember being much happier, and she seemed that way too. I mean, do you think she could have tried . . . to . . . ?"

"Commit suicide?" interrupted Shayne.

"Yeah."

Shayne had pondered the possibility. "I don't know, Will. The heater in the room was old, and well, it could have been an accident. Anything can happen at a joint like The Jolly Beachcomber."

"The Jolly Beachcomber? I gave her enough money to stay at the Sheraton Bal Harbour if she wanted. What was she doing at that rathole?"

Shayne stood up. He could see the direction the conversation was heading. Any minute now Gentry would clear his emotionally-cobwebbed mind long enough to wonder what the detective had been doing at the place his daughter was staying. "I don't know, Will. You'll have to ask *her* when she comes around. In the meantime I hate to leave you at a time like this, but I've got some business that won't keep."

"O.K., and thanks for everything."

"Sure," said Shayne, momentarily placing his hand on his friend's shoulder.

He walked into the hall and toward the elevator. What *was* Lorie Rollins doing at some run-down motel? That was just another bad odor from what was becoming a foul-smelling situation. It was beginning to look more and more like her plan with Disco Dan had Gentry's checkbook as its target. Still, the gas didn't fit. Accident, suicide, or whatever, it just didn't fit.

The elevator doors slid open. Shayne spotted a familiar face behind a nurse and an orderly.

Disco Dan.

VII

HIS EYES LOCKED ON THE MAN HE HAD SEEN RETURN with Lorie to her motel room, Shayne said, "Hey, you!"

Disco Dan glanced up at the redhead momentarily before a flicker of recognition crossed his face.

He shoved the unsuspecting nurse and orderly into the big redhead, knocking him backward.

When Shayne recovered his balance, he saw the elevator doors just closing. The red arrow pointing down lit up.

Shayne broke for the stairwell. Slamming open the door marked EXIT, he threw himself down the concrete stairs.

When he reached the ground floor, the blood was coursing through

his body. He headed down the corridor for the elevator. The descending arrow told him he had beaten the man to the bottom. He waited.

The elevator door opened. Empty.

Disco Dan had to have gotten off at the second or third floor. The only way down was the stairway he had just used.

The big detective ran back toward the door. As he rounded the corner, the stairwell door was flung open, and Disco Dan shot out. The man in a rumpled linen suit was heading for the rear exit.

Shayne pursued.

Breaking into the daylight, the redhead saw his quarry zigzagging through the parking lot some twenty yards ahead. The man dodged a black pickup and lunged toward the street.

Shayne had cut the distance between them in half by the time he reached the sidewalk, close enough to Disco Dan's labored breathing. The redhead was barely conscious of the traffic.

They turned a corner.

The linen suit squeezed between two parked cars.

A laundry truck hit its brakes to avoid Shayne as he hurled himself toward the other side of the street.

The fleeing figure looked back.

The blue sedan caught him at full speed, throwing him up and over the bumper like a mad bull tossing a careless matador. Disco Dan's body jerked wildly. Shayne winced at the impact as the flying figure came to rest on the hot blacktopped street.

The sedan didn't slow down.

Even before he knelt beside the limp figure, the redhead knew Disco Dan's dancing days were done.

THE SLENDER, REDHAIRED WOMAN FACING SHAYNE WAS wearing nothing but a silk slip and a $50-an-hour smile.

"What can I do for you, big guy?" she pouted.

Shayne fired up a Camel. "For starters you can put on that dress."

"You're the first guy who's ever asked me to do that."

"What's the matter, Caron?" said Shayne. "I thought all girls liked to dress up?"

"In this," the woman fumed, holding up an electric-blue micro-mini. "That bastard Painter's had me walking the street on the strip all week." She snatched the lit cigarette from Shayne's hand. "Thanks. I wouldn't mind baring my all for the good old MBPD if just once one of the guys in Vice would have to pose as a male prostitute. Maybe wear a fish-net shirt and some hip-huggers."

Shayne lit up another cigarette. "You know what they say?"

"Don't tell me that I made my own bed and now I have to lie on it."

Shayne didn't.

"I'll bet you're here," she said, "because you've finally decided to accept my standing offer of dinner and drinks." She smiled.

"Well, not exactly," said the redhead, knowing her offer was for anything but standing.

"Oh," she said, the smile vanishing. "You're here because you want some information from Lt. Thurman, Vice Cop." She accented the last two words as she pulled a sleek cotton dress over her head.

"You're pretty perceptive."

"Painter tells me that periodically," she said, "but he always adds, 'for a woman.' "

Shayne shook his head at Caron Thurman's caustic remark. He had known the redhaired woman before she had earned her detective's shield. She had worked her way up from patrol officer, taking more licks than usual because of her obvious femininity and the little chauvinist who ran the MBPD—his nemesis, Chief Peter Painter.

"What'll it be?" she said.

Shayne explained the accident he had just witnessed. He then told the Vice officer that he'd like her to dig up any information on the victim.

"Mike," she cooed, "I'd be happy to do that little thing for you."

"Great." Shayne felt good.

"Why don't you drop by my apartment," she said, "say around sixish."

Shayne didn't feel so good.

"I become much more cooperative after a couple of glasses of rose," she added, "if you know what I mean."

Shayne did.

THE BIG DETECTIVE HAD TO ADMIT HE FELT A LITTLE strange as he sat down in the crushed velour recliner. Caron Thurman's tastes ran to the extremes. Posters for an art exhibition clashed with a photo of Miss Florida Physique. Some barbells sat in a corner beside a chunk of clay on a pedestal. A baby grand separated the finely appointed living room from a Soloflex weight-training machine.

"I'll be right out," she called over the blare of a Rolling Stones concert.

His friend in Vice was hard to figure. On one hand she could be at home in Miami's finest eateries, but on the other she had recently won the department's judo tournament. He might have been able to enjoy himself if he hadn't been here on business.

A phone call to the hospital had told him Lorie was still in a coma. The more he thought about what had happened that day, the more he doubted the gas was an accident. And the death of Disco Dan was too convenient to be anything but deliberate on someone's part. Coupled together, the incidents told Shayne the clock was running on this one, and he had to shut off the alarm.

"Voila," she said.

She was wearing blue-striped running shorts that revealed well-tanned legs and a mesh, sunburst-orange top that showed a whole lot more.

"I feel overdressed," he said.

"We can remedy that." She reached over. "Let's start by taking off the sports coat." As she did, she paused to stare at the muscular arms that emerged from his polo shirt. "Arnold Swartzenegger, eat your heart out."

"What have you got for me?" he said, trying to get down to business.

"What exactly do you want?" She placed her hands on her hips and started the classic strip-joint swagger.

"I never mix business with pleasure."

"Oh, well. We can take care of business tomorrow morning."

"Come on, Caron. Just tell me what you found out."

She pouted for a moment, then lay back on the Soloflex. "Your accident victim was a first-class jerk named Kevin Walls."

"I hope your grief will allow you to finish this story."

"Walls a/k/a Stoney Walls, Wallace Stone, etc. is a small-change conman with t-bill aspirations."

"What's he specialize in?"

"Pigeon drops and boiler room scams."

"A long yellow sheet?"

"Yeah," she said, starting to pump iron. "I do this whenever I'm pent up. Walls was a four-star loser. Latest entry was a couple of weeks ago across the Bay. Busted out at Miami International. He and a partner were shilling a non-existent limo service to the Beach. I know that's a small-potatoes bust, but I guess you've heard about their new city manager's war on crime?"

"Cameron."

"Yes. I've got enough friends over there to know that he's a publicity-seeker, a 'my way or the highway' type. Wants to get rid of the old guard, bring in his cronies."

Shayne filed away the information. "What happened to Walls and his partner?"

"Rick Mason, ex-biker. The two of them conned their way out of the bust. I called a former roomie who's in the steno pool over there. She says the scuttlebutt is the two creeps were kicked loose by the big cheese himself."

"Cameron."

"Walls and Mason must have been good to weasel out of that one." She sat up, her forehead starting to sweat, and crossed to the arm of the redhead's chair. "Warm-up's over, Mike. Let's get down to the main event."

Shayne straightened up. "Look, Caron, I appreciate what you've done for me, and you are an attractive woman."

"But there's Lucy."

"Right."

"That doesn't matter."

"It does to me."

She stood up so that any space between them vanished. "I got where I am by taking my daddy's advice—'If you see an orange on the tree, pick it before it spoils.' "

Shayne decided later an apple would have been a more appropriate image.

VIII

ONCE WAS CHANCE, TWICE WAS COINCIDENCE, AND Shayne had about as much faith in coincidence as he did in a pro-ballplayer asking to renogotiate his contract downward after a bad season. It took a few phone calls to find out that the city manager's day always began with an early morning session at the Liveoak Racquet Club. A few bills had caused Cameron's scheduled opponent to develop a sudden cramp directly beneath his wallet.

The redhead stepped onto the court behind the balding but well-developed city manager. Whatever else the man was, he seemed to the detective an athlete. It had been awhile since he had played racquetball, Shayne knew, but he was there to score points of a different sort.

"Where's Simms?" said the redhead's six-foot opponent. "He promised me a chance to win back what I lost yesterday."

"How much did you lose?"

"Fifty bucks and a lot of pride."

Shayne pulled his wallet out of his sweatshirt and threw Ulysses S. Grant to the floor. "This'll cover the money."

"You don't mind if I serve first," said the husky official.

Sensing he was up against another of those types who were used to winning through intimidation more than ability, Shayne hit a few off

the front wall, then tossed the ball to him.

Cameron served three aces before the redhead won the serve.

"You're Cameron, the new city manager," said Shayne as he put the ball in play.

Preoccupied with Shayne's comment, Cameron couldn't return the deep shot.

"Serve again," he said. "I wasn't ready."

"1-3," said Shayne, hitting another into the deep left corner.

Cameron caught his racquet against the wall.

"2-3," said the detective. "I've been reading about you in the papers. Something about a war on vice."

The city manager cut loose and put one away against the front wall low. "When I'm through, the streets of Miami will be as clean as this court."

"So you play hardball with our criminal population."

"As far as I'm concerned, that's the only way to play the game. You break the law—I break you."

"You seem to be ruffling a few tail-feathers."

"That's the way it is with urban renewal. You've got to tear down the old before you build the new, and if somebody gets his tail in my way, so be it."

Going for the ball, Shayne had to avoid a moving Cameron. "Obstruction," he called.

"If I had known they let pansies in this club, I wouldn't have joined."

Shayne bit his lip. His time would come.

The city manager won the first game.

"Double or nothing?" he said.

"You don't mind if I serve first," said Shayne, taking the ball from Cameron's hand.

"Be my guest."

Shayne jumped ahead 6-2. Then Cameron started a run. With the score knotted at 6 apiece, the baldheaded athlete hit a looping shot toward the back wall. Shayne, taking a step, saw Cameron deliberately move between him and the ball. Lowering his shoulder, the big redhead drove it into the city manager's mid-section, flattening him against the transparent wall.

"Obstruction," said Shayne as the ball continued to bounce lazily toward the front wall.

Cameron lay there in a daze, his nose starting to bleed.

"If you want to clean up the streets so bad," said the redhead, "why'd you kick loose a scumbag like Kevin Walls?"

For a split-second Cameron seemed to lose his composure. His eyes widened and he cocked his head. "How did . . . "

That was all Shayne needed. He knew he wasn't going to get anything more. He picked up the money, then turned to the city manager who was dripping blood all over the floor. "Hey, pal, you'd better get someone in here quick. This place is starting to get filthy—just like the streets of Miami."

BY MID-MORNING SHAYNE HAD RUN DOWN THE FIRST SIX names he had gotten the night before. For the list of known addresses frequented by the late Kevin Walls, he had paid Caron Thurman a stiff price.

Larry's Big Stick and Video Arcade was one of those run-down pool palaces that had recently added video games to attract the younger crowd. The black swatch painted across the end of the sign indicated to the redhead that more recently Larry's flight into the wonderful world of videomania had crashlanded.

The guy behind the cash register had stringy, long hair that blended into an unkept beard. His nicotine-stained teeth gleaned above a t-shirt that read SEE MIAMI FROM A TOURIST'S POINT OF VIEW. Beneath it was a picture of the business end of a .38.

"Rick Mason here?" said Shayne. He was tired and irritated. Nothing seemed to be going his way.

"I only talk to paying customers, birdbrain."

"Hey, maggot," said Shayne, reaching out, He grabbed himself a handful of beard and jerked the startled punk downward. "Is that the same thing you tell the other fags when you're cruising Biscayne Boulevard?" The redhead figured the shortest distance between silence and information was through the punk's manhood.

"I ain't no damn fag," said the bearded man, finding it difficult to breathe. "What do you want to know?"

The big detective let go. "Mason. Does the name ring a bell?"

"Mason. I thought that's what you said. He's over there. Table six. The guy in full colors."

Shayne scanned the haze-filled room. A guy with a black headband and a jeans jacket with the sleeves cut off was breaking. On the back of the four men gathered around the table the redhead spotted an upside-down cross with the word HEATHENS stitched beneath.

The big detective decided it was time for a little tent revival. He picked up a short cue stick and a long one. "Thy rod and thy staff shall comfort thee," he mumbled under his breath, realizing tnat Larry's might be the closest thing Miami had to the valley of the shadow of

death.

"You Mason?" said Shayne, pointing the stubby cue.

"Who's asking?" said the shooter without looking up.

"A friend of Kevin's."

"Don't know no Kevin, so take a hike, pop."

"I guess you're not the guy that he and Lorie asked me to give the money to then."

Mason straightened up. "What money?"

"If you don't know Kevin, pal, then it's none of your business."

Mason rested his chin on his cue. "O.K., so I know Walls. Now give me the bread."

Shayne noticed he'd suddenly become the center of a newly-formed circle. "If you really do know him, prove it. Tell me something about Lorie."

"First of all, pop," said Mason, taking a long pull on a reefer and handing it back to a friend, "I happen to know Kevin bought it yesterday."

"Let's just say, I'm the executor of his will."

"About Lorie," Mason said tentatively, "she's just some squeeze Special K picked up when we were doing some business at the airport. The broad was a head case, that's all."

"Aren't they all," said Shayne, priming the pump.

"Yeah, but this one's a real Granola bar. First thing she tells the K when he buys her lunch is that she's in Miami to get a guy." Mason brandished his cue. "Now I'm tired of telling stories. Show me the green."

Shayne pulled out a wad of bills. "One more thing. I heard you and Special K had a cute way of getting back on the street after that airport bust. You want to tell me how you did it?"

"Not that's it's really any of your damned business," he said with a smile, "but K thought real fast, made the cops an offer they couldn't refuse. We traded the female cuckoo to the big honcho."

"Cameron?"

"That's right. Kevin told the badges he wanted to see old baldy."

"Why would old baldy talk to two dead-to-rights conmen, much less trade you in for some out-of-town girl?"

Mason tapped his temple with his stick. "Simple. K figured Cameron would be interested in who she came to get. Only funny thing was baldy let us go and the girl too so she could go ahead with it."

"Who was the target?"

"That's the $64,000 question, pop. You don't think I told you all this stuff for free, do you? Now, you give us that wad, and we give you

the name. You don't give us the wad, and Zero over there shows you just how far a pool cue'll go up your nose."

Shayne looked at the swaggering brute with his half-closed, doped-up eyes. "Don't tell me—he was named for his I.Q." The redhead tossed the wad on the floor.

Like feeding sharks they struck.

"Holy shit!" said Zero, peeling off the fifty on top and finding cut newspaper below. "It's a Boston bankroll."

"Brilliant deduction, bozo," said Shayne. "From now on maybe they'll call you Two."

Zero swung his stick at the redhead.

Shayne parried it with the longer cue, then jabbed forward with the other.

Zero, caught in the groin, rolled over in agony.

"Eight ball in the side pocket," said Shayne.

A Heathen came at the redhead from behind. Remembering what Greg Chen, his martial arts sensei, had taught him, Shayne dropped the short cue and swung the long one over his shoulder.

It struck his attacker's sternum. The redhead turned and jabbed again, ramming the tip into the surprised gang member's open mouth. "Say 'ah' for Dr. Shayne, sucker."

A stick caught the detective across the flat of his back. The redhead toppled forward against table six. Shayne picked up a ball in each hand. "Catch!" he yelled to the advancing tough and tossed a ball upward in a high arc.

By reflex the Heathen looked up. His right fist wrapped around the cue ball, the big detective put all his weight behind a right.

The crack of the Heathen's jaw was louder than a pool hall break.

Mason stood opposite the redhead—alone.

In one motion Shayne grabbed the rack and looped it over the Heathen. "I like to call all my shots," said the detective. "How do you like 'tight-lipped punk in the sidepocket'?"

"Hey, take it easy," said Mason, jarred.

Shayne twisted the rack, quickly bringing the stringy-haired punk to his knees. Aware he had the Heathen ripe for conversion, the redhead said, "Out with it. Who was Lorie Rollins after?"

Mason groaned in pain. "The top cop himself—Chief of Police Gentry."

IX

SHAYNE HUNG UP THE RECEIVER. HE HAD STOPPED BY his Flagler Street office to check in with Lucy when Mrs. Gentry had

called. To her questions about what he had found, he had stoically admitted only that he was making progress. How could he tell her the truth or what seemed like the truth? He had learned a long time ago not to fill in clients about a case as he went along. Roads to the truth often turned out to be blind alleys, so he stuck with the Yogi Berra Principle—it ain't over till it's over.

Likewise he had turned aside his secretary's questions about what he was working on. The thought struck him that maybe he was born for politics.

Now he had another decision to make: to confront Will with all that he knew or not? Something told him that his good friend, with his positive feelings over a newly-found daughter and the resultant feelings of guilt over not having been a proper father, was not going to believe the girl was involved in a giant sting with him as the mark. After all, what proof Shayne asked himself, did he really have? The word of a low-life biker.

Politics, hell! The only way to the truth led to Lorie Rollins, but that meant going through Will Gentry.

THE BURLY COP PACED BEFORE THE CLOSED DOOR marked ICU 2. "Ah, Mike, glad you're back," he said on seeing the detective arrive. "I'm going nuts around here by myself."

"How's she doing?"

"She came out of her coma about an hour ago."

"That's a relief."

"But the docs chased me out. Said she needed complete rest."

"Come on, I'll buy you lunch. We can have the nurses buzz you if she wakes up and you're allowed to see her."

The hospital food was better than the detective would have guessed, but Gentry barely nibbled on his roast beef and mashed potatoes. Shayne knew it neither the time nor place, but when would there be a time and place for a thing like what he knew he had to do.

"While you've been cooped up in here, Will, I thought I'd do a little investigating."

"Of what?"

"You yourself said you had given Lorie enough money to stay at the Sheraton, so why, I asked myself, did she end up in a dump like The Jolly Beachcomber. I went there. I found she'd checked in with Kevin Walls, a two-bit conman."

"What are you telling me, Mike?" said Gentry, lighting up the familiar stogie.

"When I left you yesterday, I ran into Walls in the elevator. I tried to

talk with him, but he ran. Just outside the hospital he was run down by a car. I checked on him with MBPD Vice. They put me onto a friend of his."

"I don't like what I'm hearing."

"Believe me, Will, this is no picnic to sit here and tell you what I found."

"Go on," the cop growled.

"Walls' friend, some pool-hall devotee, told me that he and Walls had met Lorie when she first came to town." Shayne paused. "He said she recruited them into a scam to get at somebody."

"Who?"

The redhead hesitated, then said, "You, Will."

Gentry slammed his hand down hard, striking his plate and splattering roast beef and potatoes across the formica. "Damn it! What are you doing to me? I'm hurting enough without you telling me this bullshit."

"Easy, Will. I had to. If somebody killed Walls on purpose, I'm afraid they may have made an attempt on Lorie with the gas."

"Mike, that's enough."

"And if so, who's to say they won't try to finish what they started."

"Wait a minute." The burly cop stood up, the food decorating his white shirt. "This morning after you left I started wondering how you found Lorie in that motel. You had to have tailed her from the yacht club where you said you saw us, and I know you. You wouldn't go after her unless you had been paid to. All those questions you were asking me. Some friend—you were hired to spy on me, to go behind my back, weren't you?"

Shayne stared ahead silently.

"She hired you, didn't she?"

"Will . . . "

Gentry crushed the cigar in his hand and pointed at the detective. "Right now I can't stand the sight of you. For fifteen years I've thought of you as a friend. Shit! A friend wouldn't take the word of some street scum over that of an innocent girl from Thomasville, my daughter. Get the hell out of here!"

SHAYNE HAD SPENT A RESTLESS DAY. THAT CAME FROM breaking another cardinal rule—never let your feelings get involved in a case. Maybe that was why he was having so much trouble getting at this package. It had come gift-wrapped in emotions.

The redhead's dinner had been liquid. He had thrown down quite a few belts of Martell. What troubled him most was Will. That his old

friend thought he had betrayed him ate at his empty gut. The detective knew he had to prove what he had said was true, but that meant running headlong into Will again.

The no-win situation troubling him, Shayne had passed out sometime after midnight. The phone ringing on his nightstand sounded a million miles away. His hand, clumsy and as if from under water, reached up and grabbed the receiver.

"Mike," said a voice. "Mike."

It was Will Gentry, and desperation charged his words. "What is it, Will?"

"Get down to the station quickly."

"Why?"

"Somebody just tried to kill Lorie."

X

SHAYNE HAD A FEELING THAT EVERY FEW YEARS THE MPD derenovated their Interrogation Room. Peeled a little paint, installed higher wattage bulbs, scratched up the tables a little more, ripped some upholstering from the straight-back chairs, and sprinkled a little dried blood around.

"To hell with regulations, Mike," said Gentry. "Let me introduce you to Louie 'The Lip' Gutsgell." He slapped the sitting figure across the face.

The big detective could see The Lip was a portrait of terror. Will Gentry circled him like a hawk eager to swoop down on its helpless prey. The temperature was well over 90 degrees, the AC having conveniently shut down for the occasion, and Gutsgell was perspiring like he had just pitched nine innings beneath the Florida sun.

"I want my lawyer," said the wiry figure again. "I know my rights."

As Gutsgell tried to rise, Gentry's meaty palm pushed him down.

"I'll shove you all the way to hell, maggot, unless you talk to me," said the irate chief.

Shayne had never seen his friend under less control.

"You and me go back a long way, Gentry," said the Lip.

"I was kicking your ass back then," said the cop, "and I'll kick it some more unless you tell me why you tried to kill her."

Earlier, outside the room, Gentry had explained to the redhead that he had walked into Lorie's room in time to see Gutsgell bringing a pillow down over her sleeping face.

The Lip quivered and turned to Shayne. "This man's crazy. I ain't never seen him act this way. It was just some skirt."

Shayne leaned over so he was close enough to smell the would-be

assassin's fetid breath. "She wasn't just any skirt, Louie. That girl was his daughter."

"Holy shit!" exclaimed Gutsgell. "Johnny didn't say nothing about . . . Where's my lawyer?"

"So Johnny put you up to this," said Gentry. "Why?"

"Hey, you Mutt and Jeffs can strangle me with your rubber hoses, but I ain't saying another word."

Gentry stared at him, then took the detective outside the IR.

"I think we got all we're going to," said Shayne.

"Yeah."

Gentry walked down the hall a way, then pivoted and came back. "Mike, maybe I owe you an apology."

Shayne nodded.

The cop moved on. "I can't figure out how Louie's involved though."

"Is Johnny, Johnny Steppe?"

"Yeah. Louie's worked for him as long as I can remember."

"Maybe," said Shayne, "Lorie and Walls crossed Steppe."

"Maybe."

"I thought you told me earlier you put Steppe away."

"Anything short of the death penalty in this state, and it's just a long vacation. A few years, time off for good behavior, a parole, and it's back on the streets. Steppe's been out a few months. Hell, I think I'm gonna go wake up that bastard so I can put him to sleep, forever."

Shayne grabbed Gentry's shoulders. "Come on, Will. You're not thinking like a cop. Isn't it time you started again?"

"Hell no! For the first time in my life I'm thinking like a father."

"You go off and kill Johnny Steppe, she loses a father for good, and Miami loses its best cop."

"Damn it! I've got to do something."

"Do it then. Go back to the hospital and protect your daughter. See what she'll tell you about this whole mess. In the meantime I think it's time for a private citizen, a man not hamstrung by the Supreme Court's technicalities, to pay a social call." For the first time in a long time Shayne smiled. "You know, Will, I think Johnny Steppe's going to get an early wake-up call this morning."

THE WHOLE AFFAIR HAD BEGUN WITH HIM FISHING. NOW, Shayne thought, the only things that had changed were the bait and the catch. In the pre-dawn hour he urged the Buick through the outskirts of Homestead, close enough to the Air Force base to tell they were more awake than he. Gentry had gotten him the needed address by rousting

an irritated parole officer from bed.

Shayne was surprised when he drove down the dirt road to Johnny Steppe's residence. While most of south Florida's mobsters either resided in Miami Beach estates or cemeteries, Steppe had chosen the middle ground. His place was a run-down, clapboard farmhouse. One of the redhead's questions was quickly answered.

Parked in front was a blue sedan.

The detective checked its front end. The hood had been dented—at just the spot where Kevin Walls' body could have ricocheted off it before hitting the street.

Shayne knocked. Nobody answered, but he heard voices through the screen door.

He walked into the kitchen. Light flickered ahead and the conversation grew louder. As he glanced around, the detective decided Steppe must have taken it over from a family of migrant workers.

The redhead paused in the hallway. A black and white movie vibrated on the television. Sitting in front of the unfocused screen was a thin man in pajamas and a bathrobe. His head was covered with intermittent white hair while a salt-and-pepper stubble had sprung up on his face. The living room reeked of mildew and urine.

"That you, Louie?" called the half-asleep figure without looking up from his private vision. "It's Cagney in *White Heat.* Get yourself a beer and sit down. You take care of that dame for me?"

"Yeah," muttered Shayne under his breath. He didn't move.

"Good job. That wipes out both of them. Geez, that little redhead can act. Now there's just one thing left to do."

"And what's that?" said the detective, planting himelf between Steppe and his entertainment.

"Hey, who are you?"

"A messenger to tell you that Louie's not coming back."

"What the hell do I care so long as the job's done. He did get the job done, didn't he, punk?" The old man began to cough.

"Smothered her with a pillow."

"Good old Louie. Best right arm a guy ever had. Punks like you are a dime a dozen, but the Louie's. Give me an old pro every time."

Shayne marvelled at Steppe's inconsistency. He could seemingly care nothing for a man who was so valuable.

"I hate to repeat myself, punk," said the old man, taking a swig of syrupy liquid from a spotted glass, "but who are you?"

"A friend, a friend of Will Gentry's."

For a second the sitting figure began to cough. Then he said, "Good. You claim you're a messenger. You go back to that cigar-smoking

bastard, and you tell him that compared to me, an elephant's got a short memory."

"I don't follow."

"You tell him he can live the rest of his life knowing that Johnny Steppe didn't forget him, that Johnny Steppe killed his daughter."

Shayne's face registered his disbelief that a man could so brazenly admit to such a thing.

"What's a matter, punk? Don't you get it? I'm a dying man. What more can they do to me? You see I want Gentry to know. He took something away from me years ago. It took me a long time, but I finally took something just as valuable from him."

Revenge, thought Shayne, the oldest of motives.

"Yeah, punk," continued Steppe, his eyes riveted to the television, "I know all about him and Aimee. I had connections once. After placing a few last bucks in the right places, I soon found out where they had relocated my woman after she had testified against me. I watched her all these years, her and that kid. I knew she'd find Gentry, so all I had to do was live long enough for her to come to him. Aimee was the kind of broad that'd sooner or later tell her daughter who her father was."

"One question. How did Walls fit in?"

"I hired him to steer the girl in the right direction and keep me informed. When the time was right, he was supposed to waste her. Get it?" Steppe began to laugh so hard it became a deep cough.

"You killed Walls?"

"I can't stand incompetence. That kid screwed up twice trying to do her in. First he tried some waterskiing accident. When that flopped, he tried gas. You know what they say about good help."

Shayne smiled. "You're gonna keep on saying it when I tell you the truth about Louie."

"What are you talking about?" said Steppe, a notch taken out of his self-assurance.

"Like Walls, Louie botched the killing. Right now the girl's safe with her father, and The Lip is playing canary at the local lockup."

Shayne left the old man in a spasm of coughing and curses.

XI

SHAYNE DROVE BACK SLOWLY UP ROUTE 1. TWO THINGS stared him in the face—the early-morning sun and the abundance of coincidence.

The whole thing was too pat. After all this time, how could Steppe have known that Will and Aimee's daughter would come to her father?

How could he have known that she'd come to get even with her father and end up close? How could he have known that she'd need a helper like Kevin Walls that the mobster could provide? And it was certainly convenient that Aimee Devreaux had died just as Steppe had been released from prison.

There was only one solution—check it out.

Shayne turned left onto the Palmetto Expressway and called Lucy on the mobile phone.

"Angel," he said, "I've got to take a little plane ride. Have a ticket waiting for me at Miami International on the earliest flight to Tallahassee."

IT WAS LATE AFTERNOON WHEN SHAYNE RETURNED TO the Magic City. Immediately he headed the Buick across the Bay. When he arrived at the hospital, he found it surrounded by black and whites and the familiar yellow tape of a police line. Getting out of his car, he spotted the black van that belonged to the MBPD SWAT team.

Standing behind the van with a clipboard in one hand and a microphone in the other was Lt. Shaffer. As the detective ducked under the tape, a black-clad policeman barred his way with an M-16. "Hold it, buddy!"

"What's going on?" said the redhead.

"Hostage situation. Now get back there where you belong."

Shayne's stomach somersaulted. "Who's being held?"

"I told you to get behind the line."

"Hey, Shaffer," the detective yelled at the SWAT-team leader.

Lt. Shaffer looked up from his clipboard. "Let him pass, Bristol."

Shayne approached the leader carefully, making certain he kept the van between him and the hospital. "Who's being held?"

"An old friend of yours, Chief Gentry."

"What's the situation?"

"Class III. Some guy's holding him up there on the fourth floor—sixth window from the left."

The detective looked up. "You said Gentry. What about a girl?"

"Just the Chief. Funny you should mention it, but a woman is his sole demand. If we don't bring him one Lorie Rollins in"—he glanced at his watch—"twelve minutes, he's threatened to blow Gentry away."

"If you do, he'll blow her away."

"No chance of that. Another hostage violates procedure."

"Where's the girl?"

"Just before the guy broke into ICU 2, they had taken her down to X-ray for some tests. She's safe."

"Do you know who's got Will?"

"Visual I.D. only. No confirmation of name. Older man, thin, bent over—looks sick."

"Johnny Steppe, an old gang boss."

"You sure?"

"Just about. What's your plan? Wait to see if he's really serious about killing Will?"

"I've got a team at either end of the hall and two snipers in position, but the guy's too smart to get near a window. We're stalling now." He stopped to call in the information the redhead had just given him.

"I've got an idea," said Shayne, "if you want to listen."

"Why should we? You're an amateur."

"Because, Shaffer, this whole situation is my fault."

THE MAN IN THE ORDERLY'S UNIFORM METHODICALLY pushed the gurney down the hall. The sheet was drawn up to the neck of the still passenger. Reaching ICU 2, the white-clad figure knocked, then turned his back.

A shade was raised from inside. A voice said, "Wheel her in—slowly—and keep your free hand on your head."

The figure did as told.

As soon as the gurney rolled into the dimly-lit room, six gunshots exploded in rapid succession. The thin man in a rumpled seersucker suit stood almost cackling as he let the .38 fall from his gnarled hands. "How does it feel, Gentry," he laughed, "to lose something you really love? I killed her, and you can't do a thing about it. Now the score's even."

The once-startled police chief rose swiftly from the chair in which he had been seated and leaped at Steppe. His meaty fingers closed around the thin man's throat, and he began to choke.

"Hold it, Will!" said Shayne. Forsaking his role as orderly, he tried to pull the Chief off the gasping figure.

Gentry was possessed. His eyes bulged and his mouth twisted. "You lousy bastard," he screamed as he shook the shooter like a dog with a rat in its jaws.

Shayne tried to pry him loose, then quit. Swiftly he threw back the sheet on the gurney. "Don't waste your life, Will, on somebody who's just pumped lead into a C.P.R. dummy."

Everything froze. Gentry loosened his grasp and turned. Steppe, though coughing uncontrollably, stumbled toward the gurney.

Six holes punctured the polyethylene.

"Thank God," said Gentry, "Lori's O.K."

Steppe stared blankly at Shayne, the life nearly gone from his eyes. "You cheated me. You cheated me."

Footsteps echoed down the hallway.

"Sit down, Will," said the redhead. "We've got to talk."

"Sure," said the cop, "as long as my daughter Lori's safe."

"Lori's safe, but, Will, she's not your daughter."

XII

"SO HE HATED ME THAT MUCH," SAID WILL GENTRY some time later as he and the big detective wandered down the hospital corridor.

"Enough to spend his entire time in prison dreaming up a scheme to get back at you for taking something of his."

"But I loved Aimee."

"So did he, in his own way. He considered her his private property."

"But why a scheme involving a daughter of mine?"

"He wanted to get at somebody close to you."

"Then why didn't he go after Mrs. Gentry?"

"Maybe it's because she never had anything to do with Steppe, or maybe because of your relationship with Aimee he figured you and Mrs. Gentry weren't that close."

The burly chief's eyes revealed that the redhead had hit an exposed nerve.

"When I asked you if you thought my wife had any knowledge about Lorie," said the cop, "I think I really knew the answer. I believe my wife has known about Aimee since it happened so long ago, and maybe that's part of why we were never as close as we could have been." Gentry accepted a Camel from the redhead, but didn't light it. "If Lorie Rollins isn't my daughter, how did she have the picture and the letter?"

"I flew up to the capital this morning, then rented a car and drove across the state line to Thomasville. What I found was that Aimee had died earlier this year. Something about a tractor overturning on her, and I wouldn't be surprised if Steppe was behind that too. The Sheriff up there's an old-timer. He said that Aimee showed up right after you told me the trial ended. She didn't have any kids, she lived alone, and she never married even though she had a lot of offers. Anyway, a little while before the accident a young girl came to work for her to help her around the house. They got close."

"You mean Steppe planted Lorie? She was working for him all along?"

"That's the way I read it. The picture she probably found while

snooping around. And the letter—well, you said you'd never gotten a letter from her, so that was easy to forge. Any info Steppe needed for it he probably got from the girl."

Gentry twisted the unlit cigarette in his mouth. "Why would a girl agree to such a plan if she was supposed to end up dead?"

"My guess is Steppe told her that her job was just to get close to you, to get as much money as she could. Then she could take off and leave you in the lurch."

"But that wasn't enough for him, was it?"

"No, he was doubtless planning to kill her from the start. Those six gunshots up there awhile ago were the fourth attempt on her life. When Walls and Gutsgell failed, Steppe decided to do it himself. He had to kill her before she told you the truth. It was the best way to make you suffer."

"Maybe he succeeded . . . in a way."

"What do you mean?"

"Even though I know now she's not my daughter, Mike, she's the closest thing I ever had to one. I've got to tell you it felt good. You know, I think I believed because I wanted to believe. Eleven days and a memory weren't enough. I wanted tangible proof it had all happened."

Reaching the end of the hall, the two men paused before the electric doors to the outside.

"Mr. Gentry," interrupted a voice, "I wanted to explain."

Shayne and Gentry looked down the hallway to the right. In a wheelchair sat a solitary blonde.

"Lorie, I . . . " Gentry began. Then he just nodded in her direction. "Come on, Mike," he said, walking into the sunshine, "I want you to meet somebody close—my wife, Kathryn Gentry."

THE THICK, MOIST STEAM DRIFTED LAZILY IN THE SMALL room like scudding clouds. The bald, athletic figure reclined on the lower redwood bench as if a king on his throne.

The only door opened. A figure in a Turkish towel entered and sat down directly above him, just outside of his vision.

"Not many people in here this time of morning," said Cameron after a while.

"I know," said Shayne. "Looks like we're alone."

Recognizing the voice, the bald man spun around. "Who let you in?"

"Some guys'll do anything for money."

"Who are you?" said Cameron. "I asked the manager about you the other day, and he said you weren't a member."

"I'd never join a club that let a scum like you in."

Cameron stood up. "You can't barge in here and blow off your mouth like that to me. What gives you the right?"

"Let's just say I'm a friend of Will Gentry and I don't like what you tried to do to him."

"What the hell are you talking about?"

Shayne explained what he had figured out about Walls and Cameron.

The City Manager smirked at the detective. "You can't prove anything. Who'd take the word of a street lice like Mason over that of a public official?"

"We both know the deal you made. You were going to stand by and let Walls and the girl pull their scam," said Shayne, realizing that Walls had been the weak link in both Steppe's and Cameron's plans. "Then you'd be there to sweep the pieces of Will Gentry out the door."

"There's no law that says a citizen has to stop a crime he hears about."

The redhead walked toward the door. "If you pull anything like this again, make book I'll come after you."

"Is that a threat?"

"A promise."

"I'm really worried, Mr. . . . "

"The name's Shayne, Mike Shayne. Don't you forget it."

"I won't—and that's a promise."

Shayne looked at the bald man over his shoulder. "Seem a little hotter than normal to you?" he said.

Cameron eyed him strangely.

"That door's lock looks broken to me," said the redhead. "When I close that door, anybody left in here could start to sweat bad, even burn before somebody found him. Of course there's no law that says I have to tell anybody out front about this potential problem."

Cameron lunged toward the door. "You bastard."

Shayne heard the lock click shut behind him. ●

NEXT MONTH

Mike Shayne returns in another thrilling adventure.

DON'T MISS IT!

A History of Detective Games From Parker Brothers

How Crime Plays

by AMY E. DEAN

Photos courtesy of Parker Brothers

There's a fantasy that thrives in the mind of every lover of detective stories, and that is to be a detective. The irresistible challenge of any whodunit is to try to beat the gumshoe to the correct suspect. Using clues, common sense, and intuition, the reader strives to solve the crime as skillfully as the detective assigned to the case—without ever doing more than turning pages.

However, there are times that "armchair" detectives yearn for more active sleuthing on their own: to collect clues, gather suspects, and solve a crime themselves. What better way to do this than by turning a crime-solving case into a game, where players compete to be the first to close the case.

Since the early 1900s, Parker Brothers—the century-old manufacturer of popular games—has offered detective fans nearly a dozen mystery-solving games. These games were designed to satisfy the most ardent detective fans with a challenging mixture of chance, logic, and deduction.

Parker Brothers published its first detective game, THE SHERLOCK HOLMES CARD GAME, in 1904. While the game was more a form of entertainment than a detective's challenge, it did loosely represent some exploits of the world-famous detective, Sherlock Holmes.

THE SHERLOCK HOLMES CARD GAME, produced in 1904, featured stylish cards and "elementary" game play.

The object of the game was to capture as many criminal cards (worth 1 point) as possible and to obtain the valuable Sherlock Holmes card (worth 5 points). The winner was the player with the most points at the end of the game.

Game play was "elementary." Players turned over the top card on their playing pile, then tried to find a matching card before the other players did. The first to do so "captured" the criminal on that card—a burglar, thief, or robber. However, if the Sherlock Holmes card was exposed, game play became quite lively. The player who turned the card over had to shout, "Sherlock Holmes," then race to snatch the exposed cards from the other players. Although the game was rather simplistic, it remained popular until the mid-1920s.

The years between the late 1930s and early 1940s were a detective's dream-come-true. During that time, Parker Brothers offered four detective games that captured the true essence of a detective's job. These games were lively, required quite a bit of logical and deductive thinking, and were realistically designed down to the smallest detail. Each game was accompanied by pages of rules and promised to demand a healthy time commitment from the players.

G-MEN, produced in 1936, capitalized upon the popularity of the federal agent at that particular time. The game itself originated from

Melvin Purvis, described as "a former ace of the Department of Justice" and credited with the capture of John Dillinger.

The object of G-MEN was simple: apprehend the Public Enemy. Each player took the part of a G-Man in hot pursuit of a criminal. Players spun a double spinner to move the G-Man pawn and the Public Enemy pawn on a game board showing a bird's-eye view of an American county. Players chased the criminal through small, sleepy towns and industrial cities, across rugged mountains and dense forests, and over raging rivers and rough terrain.

The 1936 G-MEN, created by the man credited with the capture of John Dillinger.

The first player to move the G-Man and Public Enemy pawns to the same location caught the criminal—and won the game. But occasionally a Public Enemy eluded capture; after thirty minutes of unrewarded pursuit, the rules allowed a second G-Man to enter the game. However, the G-Man would always win the game because, as the rules assured, ". . . just as in real life, the Public Enemy cannot escape being captured by the G-Man."

Similar pursuit-and-capture play was featured in MAN HUNT, produced in 1937. Like G-MEN, players took the part of an agent in pursuit of a criminal. However, MAN HUNT included two unique features. First, agents pursued the criminal across a detailed map of the

United States, drawn on an oversized game board. State boundaries, geographical landmarks, major cities, and primary transportation routes were featured, making the board closely resemble a road map.

Second, each agent pursued a different criminal. To begin the game, players chose their criminal from a deck of criminal cards. Each card included a "mug shot" drawing of the criminal, his physical description, and his biographical sketch. For example, Slicker Watson's criminal card reads as follows:

> "WANTED for theft of Union Funds, at Uniontown, Penna., Dec. 1, 1936. Age 33, Height 5 feet 9 inches, Weight 163 lbs. Reddish brown hair, weak blue eyes, constant smoker. Scar on right side of face. If located hold and notify Police, Uniontown, Penna. Born in Philadelphia, Penna. Mixed up with 'Protective' Organizations there. Became labor agitator and later Delegate for Coal Miners Union. Has been active in North Carolina, Evansville, Indiana and the region around the Southern Central States."

MAN HUNT, the 1937 game where you move across the United States to "track down your man."

To catch the criminal, agents used the information on the criminal's card, judgment, and plain old intuition. The first step was to determine the first likely destination of the criminal. Given Slicker Watson's past history, for example, he could be in Uniontown or Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; North Carolina; Evansville, Indiana; or anywhere around the Southern Central States region.

The agent then used any of the three modes of transportation—car, train, or plane—to move to that destination. Another player would look at the clue cards for Slicker Watson to determine if the first destination was correct. If it was, the agent then received a Police Report that gave clues for the criminal's second stop. Successful pursuit of the criminal to five locations, and eventual capture of the criminal at the fifth location, determined the winner of the game.

But if the "legwork" involved in G-MEN and MAN HUNT became too exhausting, worn-out gumshoes could earn a well-deserved rest by playing JURY BOX. Produced in 1936, JURY BOX challenged the mental powers of logic, reasoning, and deduction. Players participated as members of a jury, whose duty it was to determine the guilt or innocence of the defendants in six different criminal cases. Developed by Roy Post, "a famous criminologist," the game box boldly pronounced the gravity of its contents: "Where YOU, the JURORS, judge the ACCUSED. CONSIDER the EVIDENCE carefully. A HUMAN LIFE IS IN YOUR HANDS."

You had to decide the guilt or innocence of defendants in six challenging criminal cases in the 1936 game, JURY BOX.

Each case envelope contained a written report, detailing the background facts of the case; two photographs (Exhibits), providing visual information essential to the case (such as a murder scene); and a sealed envelope, which contained the correct verdict. The winner of the game was the juror who gave the most correct verdicts after all six cases had been "tried."

The fourth detective game offered by Parker Brothers in the late 1930s capitalized upon the popularity of the American detective writer, S.S. Van Dine. The game introduced Philo Vance, Van Dine's ever-intelligent New York detective.

Advertised as being "radically different from any previous form of amusement," the game gave would-be detectives the opportunity to solve a case solely through the use of clues. The object of the game was to find and bring a criminal to justice.

The detective-players first had to become familiar with the characters in the case: the Master of the House, the wife, a bond salesman, a social secretary, the Grandfather, the Aunt, the cook, the maid, the butler, the chauffeur, and the gardener. These characters, all suspects, were members of the well-to-do Master's household, in which the following crime occurred:

> "On the day when we are introduced to this group of people, the Master of the Household has just discovered the loss of $20,000 worth of negotiable bonds which had been delivered to him the night before by a young bond salesman. The Master, being well acquainted with this young man, had asked him to spend the night, and after exmining the securities, had very carelessly placed them in a drawer of the table in the center of the living room. In the morning, they were missing . . ."

Players then chose to be one of the six police characters trying to solve the case. These characters were familiar to readers of S.S. Van Dine's detective stories as Sergeant Heath; Medical Examiner Doremus; Captain Dubois, a fingerprint expert; Detective Snitkin; District Attorney Markham; and Van Dine, Philo Vance's assistant.

The action then took place on a game board representing the grounds and layout of the house where the crime occurred. Moving around the board enabled players to collect clue cards. Each suspect in the case had 10 clues that pointed to that person as the thief. Players tried to collect clues that seemed to point to a particular person. For example, a feminine clue (such as a lace handkerchief) could point to one of the

female suspects, where a masculine clue (such as a cigar butt) would incriminate a male suspect.

Each suspect in the case had a clue card that listed all 10 clues that meant they had committed the crime. The cards were kept secret from the players until a suspect was accused of the crime. When this happened, the player who accused a suspect had to give at least four correct clues to identify that suspect.

When that happened, the player could then enlist the help of Philo Vance in convicting that person. To do so, both the player and Philo Vance moved around the board, continuing to collect clue cards. The first player to collect seven correct clue cards for a suspect convicted that person—and won the game.

THE S.S. VAN DINE DETECTIVE GAME, produced in 1937, introduced Van Dine's popular detective, Philo Vance.

G-MEN, MAN HUNT, JURY BOX, and S.S. VAN DINE DETECTIVE GAME were produced for only a short time. By 1942, the games were no longer offered, and detective fans had to wait seven years for another Parker Brothers detective game.

But the wait was rewarding. For in 1949 Parker Brothers brought to the United States one of England's most popular games. The game has been produced by Parker Brothers ever since, making it the most durable detective game offered by the company.

What game was this, whose subline was "the great detective game"? Here are a few clues:

• The game took place in Mr. Boddy's Mansion.

• Mr. Boddy was murdered by someone, in one of the rooms of his Mansion, with an as yet-unidentified weapon.

Need more clues? Here's a list of the suspects in the case: Colonel Mustard, Miss Scarlet, Professor Plum, Mr. Green, Mrs. White, and Mrs. Peacock. Sound familiar? If they do, you know the game was CLUE.

By far the most familiar detective game of all time, CLUE was designed as a murder-mystery "stage play." Players entered the game

The 1949 edition of CLUE. Today's editions remain true in almost every way to the original form. The one exception is that today's "weapons" are made of plastic. Earlier versions of the game included metal pieces and an actual loop of tied rope.

after the action (crime) had been committed. Then, in typical Agatha Christie mystery format, the players tried to solve the crime.

Clue cards were used for each suspect, room in the mansion, and possible murder weapon. At the beginning of the game, one suspect card, one room card, and one weapon card were set aside. These three cards were the solution to the "who-where-how" mystery, but no one saw them until someone was ready to make an accusation. The rest of the cards were dealt to the players; then the real detective work began.

Players moved from room to room on a game board drawn to represent the first floor layout of Mr. Boddy's mansion. Once a player

landed in a room, he or she could use that room and make a "suggestion" of a suspect and weapon for the crime. For example, "I believe Mrs. Peacock killed him in the Kitchen with the Knife." If any player had a clue card for the suggested murder, room, or weapon, then that player had to show at least one of the cards to the player who made the suggestion. By this information, and through the process of elimination, players could then accuse a suspect, indicate the room of the crime, and identify the murder weapon. The player who correctly identified the who, where, and how was the winner.

After the introduction of CLUE, detective fans had to wait until 1958 for other Parker Brothers detective games. In that year, the company brought the mystery adventures of Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys to board games.

THE NANCY DREW MYSTERY GAME was a faithful representation of the young sleuth and her mystery-solving escapades. About the only things missing were her companions in her adventures, Bess Marvin and George Fayne. However, for the readers who thrilled to each of Nancy's exciting exploits, the game held an added bonus: players had to be detectives themselves to track down Nancy and figure out which of her famous cases she was working on.

Starting from the Drew house, where Nancy's shiny blue roadster was parked, players moved through the sites of some of Nancy's most popular mysteries. There were eight sites in all, including the Hollow Oak (from *The Message in the Hollow Oak),* Blackwood Hall (from *The Ghost of Blackwood Hall),* and the Old Attic (from *The Secret of the Old Attic).*

The first player to place five colored markers on one of the mystery sites solved The Case of Nancy's Whereabouts—and won the game.

In THE HARDY BOYS TREASURE GAME, players took the roles of Frank and Joe Hardy in solving Fenton Hardy's latest case—a search for missing Spanish doubloons. Players started their detective work from a space showing Fenton Hardy giving the two young detectives the order, "Boys, on this case leave no stone unturned."

Players then moved around a game board drawn to represent the neighborhood around the Hardy house. Each player had to do two things: collect bags of "gold" while trying to keep suspicious-looking characters from stealing the gold. The player who reached the finish line with at least one bag of gold was the winner.

The Hardy Boys were also featured in a 1978 Parker Brothers game, based on the popular television show of that time. Titled THE HARDY BOYS MYSTERY GAME, players again took the roles of Frank and Joe Hardy as they tried to solve The Secret of Thunder Mountain. In

this adventure, players used plastic motorcycle markers to travel up and down a game board drawn to represent rugged mountain roads. As they did so, the object was to collect Evidence cards that would lead to the thief of the stolen gems. The player who discovered the thief won the game.

The later version of the Hardy Boys adventures lasted only a year, but the 1958 Hardy Boys game and the Nancy Drew game enjoyed seven years of production. By the time the seven years were over, Parker Brothers was ready to offer another detective game.

The detective duo of Louise and Jean Dana, while not as popular as Nancy Drew or the Hardy Boys, was still well-known. In THE DANA GIRLS GAME, produced in 1965, players took the part of the girls in solving The Winking Ruby Mystery—based upon a mystery from the Dana Girls mystery series:

Popular detective books for young adults were featured in Parker Brothers games. Represented clockwise are: THE HARDY BOYS MYSTERY GAME (1978), THE HARDY BOYS TREASURE GAME (1958), THE NANCY DREW MYSTERY GAME (1958), and THE DANA GIRLS DETECTIVE GAME (1965).

"What is the mystery?" asked Louise.
"Well," said the Captain, "just before we

> docked, I received call from Gino Morzi, a musician, to come to his stateroom. When I arrived, he grabbed my hand and gasped, 'Please, Captain, save Carlo—Winking Ruby. Hurry!' That was all he said and then lapsed into a coma."

Players moved across an ocean to various nautical stops to collect the clue cards needed to solve the mystery. The first player to finish the game with four clue cards was the winner.

But despite the popularity of the Dana Girls, the game didn't last more than a year. However, a new detective game was ready to take its place that year. Styled as a spy-type adventure game, SPECIAL AGENT enjoyed four years of popularity.

Players were "secret agents" who tried to be the first to return to headquarters with the correct suspect and clues. Agents traveled on a game board with several secretive locations to collect clues: a movie house, an airport, a phone booth, the lobby of a hotel, the docks—even a site cryptically marked "Meet Joe."

The 1966 spy-type adventure game, SPECIAL AGENT.

After SPECIAL AGENT had ceased production, would-be detectives had a long "stake-out" before Parker Brothers made its next move to another detective game. But, in 1980, detective fans were

rewarded for their patience with a new—and most challenging—assignment. STOP THIEF, the electronic cops and robbers game, added a whole new dimension to criminal pursuit-and-capture games with the Electronic Crime Scanner. The combination of this unique, hand-held computer unit with highly competitive board game play made for an exciting and fast-moving game.

Players pursue a computer-controlled thief with the hand-held Electronic Crime Scanner in STOP THIEF, produced in 1980.

Players were licensed detectives, assigned to track down and arrest a notorious thief. The thief, however, was computer-controlled and completely invisible. But every time the thief made a move, players could hear it on the Crime Scanner. They could hear the thief commit a crime, cross a squeaking floor, open a creaking door, break the glass in a window, run along a street, or escape on the subway.

The game board showed a typical city block, with four possible sites for a theft: the bank, the jewelry store, the furrier, and the antique shop. The sounds from the Crime Scanner provided the clues to track the thief's location on the board. By using the clues and logical and deductive thinking, players attempted to move their detective pawn to "close in" for an arrest.

The Crime Scanner was also used to call in the police. But even then the game wasn't over unless the arrest was successful. The player could have made a false arrest. Or, worse than that, the thief could give the

cops "the slip" and escape. Then the chase would be on again, with each detective in hot pursuit to catch the thief.

STOP THIEF was the most recent detective game created by Parker Brothers. Over the years, it's interesting to note how the detective games offered by that company have attempted to satisfy the likes of the many crime-solving fans.

For the follower of particular detectives, Parker Brothers offered games fashioned after the more popular detectives in literature at that time. THE SHERLOCK HOLMES CARD GAME, THE S.S. VAN DINE DETECTIVE GAME, THE NANCY DREW MYSTERY GAME, THE HARDY BOYS MYSTERY GAME and TREASURE GAME, and THE DANA GIRLS DETECTIVE GAME capitalized upon the popularity of these detectives in their crime-solving exploits.

For those who wanted exciting pursuit-and-capture action in a board game, Parker Brothers designed games to duplicate the legwork involved in "getting your man." G-MEN, MAN HUNT, SPECIAL AGENT, and STOP THIEF were designed to provide the necessary thrill of dogged law enforcement pursuit of the ever-elusive criminal.

Finally, for the "armchair" detective who thrived on the "hard-to-crack" cases, JURY BOX and CLUE provided the necessary mental challenge to exercise the would-be detective's mind.

From their first, rather simplistic detective card game to board games and finally to the introduction of electronics, Parker Brothers has kept all types of detective fans satisfied while keeping up with the times.

Today, with the advent of video and home computers, a new age in game playing is unfolding. For detective fans, this new age should certainly bring about the continuing challenge to solve even greater types of crime.

Because, after all, crime *does* play. ●

MYSTERY MINIQUIZ

On radio, whose motto was: "No job too tough, no mystery too baffling"?

The A-1 Detective Agency comprising Jack, Doc and Reggie of the series "I Love A Mystery."

They had all received Christmas gifts, but one of the gifts was more than merely thoughtful—it was deadly!

Loss of a Faculty

by PETER SELLERS

WITH A CONTENTED SIGH, JEREMIAH DIGBY, PROFESSOR of the English Department of tiny Blackstock College, lowered himself into his favourite wing chair. He set his freshly poured cup of cocoa on the butler's table next to the chair, and stretched his argyled feet toward the hearth. From a small bag at his left hand, he drew a single marshmallow and dropped it, with a plump plop, into the steaming mug. The professor smiled benignly as it sank beneath the dark surface briefly, then bobbed happily back into view.

On his record player, the Vienna Boys' Choir sang "Oh Holy Night," and Digby hummed along, blowing gently on the surface of the mug. The record player was a reliable RCA, which had seen Digby through more Christmases than he could recall. It was old, true, and

not in the least sleek or modern looking. But Digby really did not care for those new high technology stereos with their tiny buttons, light emitting diodes and remote control. He liked the sense of stability that came from something old, solid, and of sound British manufacture. He had bought it prior to going to India in 1947 where he spent several years teaching at universities in Delhi and Calcutta. His Master's Voice had just begun "Silent Night," and his cocoa had just reached potable temperature, when his doorbell jingled.

"Who could that be," he wondered aloud, "at eleven o'clock the night before Christmas Eve?" Struggling to his feet and into his carpet slippers, he padded across the small living room and into the dimly lit hall. The fire cast vaguely sinister shapes on the walls and ceiling. The doorbell rang again.

The door opened on protesting hinges. Digby had long meant to oil them, but somehow never did. Squinting over his glasses, he peered into the night. "Yes?" Digby said to the vague shape he thought he could distinguish there.

"Evening, professor," a voice he knew he recognized spoke from the gloom. "Mind if we go inside? Don't want you catching a death."

True, it was chilly, and Digby's worn cardigan was no defense against the cold, and the thought of his fire and his cocoa and the pipe he'd been about to enjoy tempted him sorely, but who was this on this porch so late at night? "I don't mind going in at all," he said. "But who the devil are you?"

This brought a hearty laugh from the night. A laugh that Digby knew instantly. The voice might have faded over time, but his memory of the laugh was as clear as ever. "Good Lord. Richard. When did you get back from the Orient? Come in, come in."

RICHARD THORNE WAS ONE OF DIGBY'S MOST PROFOUND successes. A brilliant scholar whom Digby had guided through the perils of undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral studies. A Rhodes scholar, Fellow of Oxnard, Cambridge, and Trinity College, Dublin. Who had finally come to rest at Blackstock, the very spot where his mercurial academic career had begun, as a member of Digby's own department.

Never, before Thorne, had Digby met a student so deeply committed to the ideals of academe. He laboured with the diligence of a consummate scholar, and, through his long years of study he had but one goal: to return to his alma mater and teach. And he had done so with a dedication that inspired admiration and no small amount of envy among his colleagues.

Many had been surprised by his decision to accept the Blackstock post. Other larger and more prestigious universities had beckoned. But Thorne had felt ties to Blackstock and he felt that its small size would give him greater opportunities to really teach, to give more of himself and of literature to his students.

Only unfortunate circumstances, reaching a head during Thorne's sabbatical three years before, had driven him away. First to South America, then to Europe, and finally to the Far East. For two years, in Rangoon and Mandalay, working on the definitive history of Burmese literature. Now, he was returned. Digby could hardly contain his delight.

"Sit down," he said, ushering Thorne into his own favourite chair. "I was just about to have some cocoa. There's more, if you'd like. Unless you'd prefer something stronger?"

Thorne chuckled his warm chuckle. "No, Professor. Cocoa'd be just fine."

THEY BOTH SAT BY THE FIRE, EACH WITH COCOA IN hand. Digby puffed madly on his pipe, filling the air with a soft aroma. "Tell me what has gone on, Richard. How is the study?"

Thorne looked surprised. "Didn't you get my letter?"

"Letter, Richard?"

"Yes, I wrote you all about it. About my plan to return and," he added with a bitter laugh, "about how there is no study."

"What?"

"It's all gone." He swallowed and his voice broke ever so slightly as he continued. "There was a fire, you see, and it burned up everything. All my notes, interviews, irreplaceable manuscripts, references, cross references. Two years' research and thousands of pages. Along with my apartment and everything I owned." He went on to tell Digby of his journey back, working his passage on tramp steamers through India and the Middle East, taking nothing with him but what he could carry.

"Oh dear," Digby concluded at the end of Thorne's tale. It was entirely insufficient, but he could think of nothing else to say. "I wish I'd received your correspondence. I could have done so much more to prepare."

Thorne sat silent for several moments, then seemed to brighten. "Well, there's no helping it now. I've come back. I figured if nothing else, I might be welcome again at Blackstock. I mean, there might be a chance of getting my old job back." He spoke with the tentative optimism of the desperate. "I mean, things must have gotten a little better over time."

Digby looked uneasy. He scratched the side of his neck inside his collar. Something that usually meant he faced a difficult or unpleasant duty. His brow furrowed so deeply it was as if, as one student had jokingly remarked, you could plant root crops.

The expression was not lost on Thorne. "What is it, professor?" Then he sighed. "I suppose it was foolish of me to think things might have changed."

Digby nodded glumly. "Not foolish, Richard. But I'm afraid things haven't changed much at all. Slater still speaks ill of you, and now that he's head of the department . . . "

"Slater head? I see." Thorne fell silent again, his head bent, eyes gazing sightlessly at the cocoa clenched in his hands. "Well I suppose I shouldn't be surprised. What, after all, had I really any right to expect. But what happened to you?"

"Nothing so unusual. After you left, so did Tompkins and Johns, and Slater's influence grew. He forced an election. I was out and he was in."

"I suppose that shouldn't surprise me either."

"No, Slater is a very clever man."

"Yes, the serpent was reckoned to be the cleverest creature in the garden."

Reaching out, Digby clasped Thorne's elbow and gave it a reassuring shake. "This makes me regret so much more that business between you and Slater."

THAT "BUSINESS" HAD BEEN ONE OF THE FEW UNPLEASant incidents to mar Blackstock's placid history. Before Thorne's much heralded arrival to assume his faculty position, Slater had been the single bright light in the department. The only scholar of any note Blackstock could boast. Digby himself had been something once, but too many years in an academic backwater had stagnated his once not inconsiderable talents.

The dislike between Thorne and Slater had been instantaneous and thorough. They disagreed over everything, from the first day of Thorne's arrival. And their faculty dividing rivalry merely intensified with the arrival of Catherine.

A post-doctoral Fellow under Slater's tutelage, Catherine Belmont was by far the most attractive student Blackstock had seen. Blessed with features and a complexion the ideals of classic beauty, she glided with a silken grace through a generally doddering department. Leaving the air sweetly tinged with hints of perfume and softness where only scotch and cigars had reigned before.

Nature took its course soon enough and Slater fell for her. Just as

naturally, so did Thorne. With fierce determination they vied for her affections, behaving more like rutting school boys than renowned scholars. For her part, Catherine seemed both a touch embarrassed and flattered by the attention she received. And she perpetuated the situation for some months by selecting neither one nor the other, but paying equal attention to both. In the end, however, Thorne and Slater were left in the cold when she abandoned her studies and absconded with an undergraduate philosophy major whose potential for distinction seemed remote at best.

Slater's resentment of Thorne exploded into unprecedented new dimensions. He blamed Thorne for undermining his position with Catherine. He blamed Thorne for dividing her attention so that the philosopher could creep in and steal her. They did not speak for weeks after she left.

Soon after Catherine's exit came time for Thorne's first sabbatical. After seven years on the faculty, he was due for tenure but timing was a problem. He had made arrangements to accompany a literary and archaeological expedition to South America, seeking the theatre of the Mayans. It was an opportunity he could not miss and, although he wished to have tenure secured before going, it could not be helped. The necessary convoking of faculty and student body members could not be organized until later. So he went, full of Digby's assurances that everything would be looked after. And indeed, in a way, everything was.

When Thorne's sabbatical was over, not only had tenure been withheld, but his position had been declared redundant. Slater, Thorne subsequently discovered, had been hard at work.

With Thorne away from the college, Slater lobbied vigorously to have tenure denied. Cutbacks in funding to the college were threatened by the Board of Governors and, as new head, Slater had considerable influence on how funds were to be allocated. There were pet projects some professors wanted retained and pet assistants others desired. As a result, it was easy enough for Slater to use such things as dangling carrots and to have Thorne's tenure denied, albeit by a slim margin.

When word reached Thorne, he simply disappeared. Except for the very occassional letter to Digby, never with a return address, no one had heard from him since and he had not returned to the college till that evening three years later.

"WELL," THORNE SAID, FINISHING THE DREGS OF HIS cocoa, "I suppose I shall see my fellow academians regardless. If Slater won't have me back, so be it. But I'm here now, so the least I can do is say hello."

"Say, here's an idea," Digby said. "Why not stop by tomorrow night at the heads' apartments. There's a bit of a do going on, you know, with

Christmas Eve and all. We'll have some mulled cider and talk over old times."

Thorne looked at Digby strangely for a moment, then smiled. "Yes," he said, "I'd like that."

"Good. It starts early, because of the holiday, so be here at five and we'll go over together."

"I'll look forward to it," Thorne said as Digby guided him to the door.

"Good night, Richard."

"Good night, professor." The door creaked shut on Thorne's figure drifting into the darkness.

BY FORCE OF HABIT, DIGBY ARRIVED IN HIS OFFICE AT EIGHT o'clock the next morning. Even Christmas Eve could not break a tradition years had set in place. There were no classes, and he doubted any students would drop by to wish him a Merry Christmas. The majority of the residents were already long departed. Few would be spending a solitary holiday season on the isolated campus.

Digby made himself a small pot of tea on the hot plate he kept in his office for mornings such as this. It was, he knew, a dangerous luxury. He had once forgotten to unplug it and only a passing student, noticing smoke seeping from under the door, had averted disaster by dousing the smouldering exam booklets the hot plate had ignited. Still, Digby did enjoy his tea.

As he sipped and puffed on his pipe, lost in a mellow Christmas reverie, he heard a faint tapping at his door. Rising, he shuffled across the office, but when he opened the door and peered into the hall there was no one to be seen. A splash of colour at his feet caught his attention. Looking down, he saw a small package, neatly wrapped in bright foil paper. There was a Christmas tag affixed which simply said, "To Professor Jeremiah Digby." Picking up the package, Digby recognized the familiar hand almost instantly: Richard.

At first, Digby hesitated about opening the gift. After all, it was not yet Christmas. But finally he relented and carefully removed the wrapping. The box inside was light and unidentified, but when he removed the lid, to his delight he found a pipe ornately carved and of Oriental motif.

Digby shook his head and smiled. "Richard," he said, somewhat sadly, "your work is destroyed and yet you remember to bring a gift for your old colleague." He spent the balance of his day doing a small bit of writing, disposing of some neglected correspondence, and running two or three last minute errands in anticipation of Christmas.

Later when Thorne arrived at Digby's home to go on to Slater's party, Digby greeted him with the new pipe clenched between grinning teeth. "My dear boy," the elder professor said, gripping Thorne's hand warmly, "this is a most thoughtful gift. But why the secrecy in giving it?"

"I didn't want to make a big thing of it. I just brought back gifts for a few people here I feel strongly about. Something that reflects how I see them. The pipe seemed perfect for you."

"Well, it certainly has brightened my Christmas. But we must be off if you're to see your old compatriots before they all depart."

THE HEADS' APARTMENTS WERE SITUATED IN ONE WING OF an ivy-covered manse that sprawled indolently along the edge of the campus. It housed all department heads and the principal in a luxury that belied the college's precarious financial situation. It was a building sadly meaningful to Digby, whose years living there formed his fondest memories.

When they arrived, the party was in full bloom. Blackstock's pillars of wisdom milled about with an air of destiny unfulfilled. The dull rumble of voices stopped abruptly as soon as Thorne entered the room.

Everyone watched him with a silence and scrutiny born of shock. And then all those who felt kindly disposed rushed forward, all asking where he'd been and how he'd fared. Those not so kindly disposed turned back to their private conversations.

In the press of well-wishers crowding Thorne, it was not at first noticed that the head was not in the room.

Jenkins, a Welsh linguistics professor, bubbled eagerly. "Richard, Richard, Richard," his lilt softening each syllable to a note of pure joy, "how good it is to see you again. How have you been? Will you be with us long?"

Thorne smiled warmly and said, "That depends on the head."

The faculty looked about them with a chorus of mumbled concern, trying to spot the author of their fellow's misfortune.

"Not here?" Thorne mused. "Perhaps he does not wish to witness the return of the prodigal."

"Prodigal, Richard?" Digby inquired.

"In a way, you might be able to say that."

Digby was about to ask just what and how Thorne had squandered when a voice sounded from the far side of the room. "I see the thorn has been returned to my side." Slater's voice had not changed. It limped its lisping way across the room like some small wounded animal, dragging a torn limb but more dangerous from its injury. "I simply hope the prodigal does not anticipate the slaying of the fatted calf."

"Well, Miles, it's good to see you haven't lost your taste for sour grapes."

Slater ignored the hand Richard extended. His own remained stuffed in the pockets of his heavy tweed trousers. Thorne remembered how Slater had so often worn tweed, trying to be the English country gentleman. He looked more lined, and grayer than he had three years before.

"What brings you back so abruptly at such an auspicious time of the year? I certainly hope you're not deceived into seeing it as a second coming, and the salvation of the faculty?" At this, Slater's side of the room chuckled with unseasonal malice.

Digby interposed, hoping to stem the flow of venom. "More like the wise man from the east bearing gifts. Look what Richard brought me back." Digby brandished the smouldering pipe, holding it by the bowl, which, though it had been burning almost constantly for hours now, remained remarkably cool.

"So," Jenkins said, "that explains it all."

"Explains what?" Digby asked.

"The genesis of the gifts, of course," replied Petrie, a modernist with the unpopular distinction of disliking Beckett, Pinter, and Williams with almost equal passion. "Each of us got one. We've been checking round and at some point throughout the day every one of us received a gift of some sort, but they were all anonymous. Just left outside our doors. Nothing on the card except the name of the recipient. Now we know who they're from. We knew of course they couldn't be from our students. I was given a leather-bound edition of modern Chinese drama in translation. No one I teach has that much taste."

Like Petrie's, all the gifts were small yet with obvious care taken in the selection. Some were of greater value, more lasting, or more sentimental than others, the degree of which depended on how Thorne felt about each faculty member, but no one was forgotten. Except Slater.

With the revelation that it had been Thorne who had played Santa Claus, the party revolved around him more closely.

Suddenly, Slater cleared his voice at the end of the room. "Excuse me, fellow revellers," he said with palpable distaste. "You are not alone in your receipt of presents. Mine, however, was emphatically not from Richard."

Just like Slater, Digby thought. Couldn't bear the thought of someone else having or getting when he wasn't. Part of that whole business with Catherine. Then he turned and looked at the Head.

Slater no longer wore the tweed jacket. Instead, his thin tweedy legs stuck out from beneath a bulky ski jacket. On anyone else it might have looked sleek, cut wide at the shoulders and tapering to the waist. On Slater, however, it looked sadly out of place. The shoulders billowed so that it seemed his upper body had been inflated at the expense of the rest of him. And the colours, a metallic grey with slashes of black and orange, clashed badly with his trousers and the upholstery. The faculty watched in silence.

"A gift from my students," Slater told them. "I feel it makes me look rather sporting."

"Which class, Miles?" Petrie asked, wondering who could possibly hate a professor that much.

"Middle English. You'd think they might have picked up something slightly more germane, yet it does capture a certain aspect of my personality, don't you think?"

"I certainly do, Miles," Thorne said, a tiny wisp of a smile toying with his lips.

"It is a trifle warm, though. I think I'll take it off for the time being." With that, he turned and sauntered out of the room.

Directly he had left, conversation sprang up in a field of wild mumblings. Students had been known, over the years, to give gifts to faculty members. Some of which were decidedly unusual. But never had anyone seen the like of this. Obviously expensive, and just as obviously totally misguided.

They were still mulling the puzzle over with uncommon animation when there was a muffled cry from the other room, a violent outburst of loud banging and smashing and the thump of something heavy falling to the floor.

DIGBY WAS FIRST TO REACH SLATER. AS THE OTHERS HUNG uncertainly by the door, Digby pushed through and knelt at Slater's side. He was dead, of that there was no doubt. Digby could see it in the twisted look on his face and the grotesque way his limbs splayed across the floor, his left arm twisted up behind his back. The new ski jacket was beside the body, Slater's right arm still held at the wrist in its cuff. It looked as if some bizarre creature had died with its jaws clamped on Slater's arm. An ashtray stand, a butler's table, and a small bookcase lay toppled over, books and ash strewn wildly about. Vases and porcelain figurines lay reduced to rubble.

"Good Lord," Digby said quietly.

"How dreadful," Jenkins said. "Do you think he's had a heart attack?"

"Perhaps," Digby said. "I'll call an ambulance."

The rest of the ensemble, white faced and visibly shaken, returned to the lounge, leaving Digby alone with the corpse. Slowly, he picked up the receiver and held it suspended in the air briefly and then began to dial.

In the other room, several faculty members had eschewed the chaste punch and poor wine Slater had been serving and had sniffed out his liquor cabinet. Scotches and brandies were soon in many hands, providing a higher level of comfort.

Digby stood by the window, nursing a glass of Slater's finest single malt. Near him, Petrie was speculating to a small group about Slater's heart attack. "Couldn't possibly have been an attack," he pronounced. "Heart failure doesn't make a person thrash about and knock over furniture like Miles did. Most people just lie down and

stay still. With reason. And with the stiffness you get in your left arm, you don't go twisting it back between your shoulders. If you ask me, he was reaching for something."

A gentle snow had begun to settle. Someone turned on the radio and Christmas music played softly. Digby listened to the carols and thought more deeply. His brow furrowed. His hair grew mussed almost as if his mental activity was stirring it by its very roots.

Halfway through the chorus of "We Three Kings," a decision came to him and he shivered in his cardigan. With a heavy inward sigh, he shuffled back into the death room. We checked carefully and found the windows all securely locked from the inside. The only entrance to this small den was, as he well knew, through the lounge.

Digby looked at the jacket sprawled on the floor with malevolence. Taking a glove from his jacket pocket, he reached gingerly into the pocket of Slater's coat and removed a bent piece of cardboard.

No one paid any particular attention as Digby walked with unhappy purpose across the lounge to the large double entrance doors. But when the click of the lock snapping shattered the silence, all heads turned to face him.

"Don't be alarmed, gentlemen, but I'm afraid we must all stay here for a while yet. Miles Slater didn't have a heart attack. He was murdered."

Just as he said it, the police pounded up the steps, down the corridor and on the doors Digby guarded.

INSPECTOR LLEWELLYN SAT AND LISTENED TO DIGBY WITH barely restrained impatience. He had been summoned from a warm Christmas Eve fire, a cup of hot cider, and a new wife twenty years his junior when a phone call said there was a possible homicide at Blackstock College. His arrival on the scene, however, found nothing but a corpse with no signs of violence on him, and a bunch of academics sitting around with their chins in their laps. Llewellyn knew there were questions to be answered.

Digby confessed that he had phoned and that there had indeed been a murder. The inspector glared at him, moustache bristling and eyes like furnaces alive with hot coals. "Who did it, then?"

Digby allowed himself a small smile. "That part is easy, I'm sad to say. It was Richard Thorne." Digby was about to point him out, but it became unnecessary.

Thorne burst from his seat, knocking a brandy from the hands of his neighbour. "Professor, how could you? This is some kind of cruel joke."

Llewellyn was not in the mood for college level tantrums. "Sergeant, restrain that man. Cuff him to something heavy and make sure he stays quiet until I ask him to speak." He turned to Digby. "Now, professor, that's a very large accusation. How do you know? And why do you think it?"

"Revenge, inspector." And Digby explained slowly, in as much detail as he was privy to, the events surrounding Thorne and Slater's rivalry, the affair with Catherine, and the loss of Thorne's position and tenure.

"So they hated one another." Llewellyn rumbled a low growl under his breath. "That means very little, professor. Everybody hates people, but they don't kill 'em. I hate my first wife, but God knows I didn't kill her. She's married to some insurance salesman selling claims on sailboats and canoes in Helmsly. Which might be close to death but it wasn't my doing. You have a very short period of time to give me more. I'm in no good mood tonight. It's only Christmas that's making me this friendly. Now if you have anything, professor, share it with me. Give me facts."

"Professor, for God's sake. I don't know why you're doing this but please tell the truth." Thorne's voice shook with near hysteria.

"Sergeant, make that man hold his tongue. Now, professor."

Digby nodded. "Yes." He lapsed into a pensive silence, thinking of Thorne and the years they had known one another and the friendship they had developed. At times like mentor and acolyte. at times seeming more like father and son. It was unfortunate, he thought, the changes time and circumstance wrought.

"Professor," Llewellyn brought Digby back to the present reality. "Don't drift away from me. I don't have all night."

"This isn't easy, inspector. Richard was no ordinary scholar."

"No, he probably wasn't. Ordinary scholars don't generally murder department heads. What made you suspicious?"

"Well, I suppose the first thing that made me wonder was that Richard knew where I lived."

"How many years had he been at the college? He hadn't been away long enough, surely, to forget where you hang your hat. Not if he is half as clever as you say."

"No, inspector, what I mean is he found me at my current address, but when he left I lived here. There is no way he could have known I wasn't head before he arrived back here, and yet when he got to my house he expressed considerable surprise that I was not head any longer. It didn't strike me at the time, but later it seemed decidedly

peculiar."

"Okay, so he was full of phony surprise at finding Slater had your old job. That hardly proves that Thorne murdered him."

"No. It simply made me wonder about other things. Like the gifts. All the gifts that Thorne would admit to giving had unsigned cards attached. Obviously, this was to establish that when Richard gave a gift he gave it anonymously. But here he made a mistake." Digby took two Christmas tags from his pocket and placed them on the table.

"One tag is from my gift, the other from the pocket of Slater's coat. Both are in Richard's handwriting. I know that writing very well, but Richard must have assumed that Slater wouldn't notice and would destroy the card. Richard often said he felt Miles was neither observant nor sentimental."

"But I didn't write it. I know nothing of that coat. And I never wrote any card to Slater. I swear . . . "

The sergeant did his duty unbidden. Llewellyn carried on. "What do these gifts have to do with anything?"

"Everything, inspector. On his way back from the Orient, Thorne stopped briefly in India—Madras, to be exact. And all the gifts he gave came from Burma or Siam or China, but Slater's came from India."

"What the devil are you talking about? First, you tell me that Thorne gave Slater a down-filled coat, which I know no more came from India than I did, and now you tell me that Thorne actually gave Slater a present straight from the Rajah's bedroom. I wish you'd explain yourself, professor. And I wish you'd tell me what these gifts have to do with this alleged murder at all anyway."

With a slight nod, Digby turned away from Llewellyn and as the inspector watched suspiciously, made his way back to the room where Slater lay, now discreetly covered by an official green sheet. He crossed to the chair from which the jacket now hung and picked it up with a poker and returned to the party.

The jacket sailed across the room and landed in a heap in the middle of the floor. All eyes locked on it, and then turned to where Digby stood stooped and ruffled and blinking behind his glasses. There was a sharp intake of breath as Digby began loping across the room. And there were startled cries of bewilderment as he began frantically stomping and jumping up and down.

In the eyes of those present, he resembled a madman. And many were instantly convinced that the events of the evening had been too much for him. In the flickering firelight, with purpose in his eye and a

horrid grimace on his lips, he was enough of a vision to cause several present to consider their chances of reaching the door alive.

Abruptly, he stopped. Casually, he strolled over to a hand carved dictionary stand which stood near the window. He fingered various volumes idly and spoke in a soft voice. "You see, inspector, what the gift here really was wasn't the jacket at all." With a grunt Digby lifted the heaviest book on the stand and swung it in a savage arc above his head and brought it crashing to the floor with a jarring blow, rattling crystal decanters, china cups, and several faculty members. Repeatedly, he lifted the book and repeatedly he lowered it with vicious intensity on the battered coat.

When he stood again, looking about the room with the volume clenched in white knuckled hands, the onlookers shrank back, mortally afraid he would seek new victims.

"Look, Digby, the jacket wasn't to my taste either but . . ." Digby waved Petrie to silence with an impatient gesture.

Tossing the dictionary aside, Digby picked up the jacket and with a loud grunt and mighty heave, tore the lining apart. The ripping brought a collective gasp and Digby shook the torn remnant like a mad dog as feathers flew about the room and a small, gnarled snake dropped to the floor.

"Thorne said he brought gifts that reflected how he saw people. That is his gift to Slater. And that is your murder weapon."

"YOU SEE, INSPECTOR," DIGBY EXPLAINED AFTER THE furor had died down, "Richard must have discovered that a great amount of feathers are shipped from Burma and surrounding countries to this country every year. And he probably heard stories about how those feathers are dried in the sun and how snakes occasionally crawl through and lay their eggs, some of which escape detection so that sometimes people in that corner of the world find reptiles in their linings. So he brought this snake back and sewed it into that jacket, which he gave to Slater using Middle English as a front. He knew, when his generosity was revealed at the party, that it would make him the centre of attention. Something Slater would not be able to abide. He knew, too, that it would drive Slater to put on the coat and that the warmth of his body would attract the serpent. Slater would collapse and die leaving Thorne with a perfect alibi, a room full of scholars. And the fact that Slater chose to die alone in a virtually locked room made it all the better for Richard. And even should it be discovered that Slater had not died naturally, but was killed by a venomous snake,

Richard must have felt it would be assumed that it was a circumstance like those he heard about in Burma."

"And what makes you so sure that it wasn't?"

"Very simple, inspector. Richard spent a few hours in Madras. He must have hatched his plot there or on the way and bought the snake there. Being a port with a climate similar to Rangoon, he assumed other things would also be similar. Unfortunately, Richard, that is where your usually thorough research was unfortunately abandoned in lieu of supposition."

"You're the one who's supposing, professor," Thorne said. "You're supposing you can put the blame for all this on me. Can't you see that this is all a lie? Can't you see that this is just another of Digby's lies? Like his lie about my being guaranteed tenure? Can't you see he's lying to make me look guilty? It's him. He did it. Digby killed Slater because Slater had him cast out as head and Digby was the one who wanted revenge. How else do you think he knows so much about his business? He must have done it. He must have."

Llewellyn watched and listened to Thorne dispassionately. Then he said, calmly, "Sergeant, gag him until the professor is through." Thorne's cry was cut off by a muffled gurgle.

"There's not much more, inspector. You see, the final piece of evidence so incriminating is that India exports no feathers here whatsoever. And this snake, this particularly nasty viper, is native to the drier parts of India and Ceylon. But not a humid climate like Burma. It could only be in that coat through human intervention."

The sergeant removed the cuff that held Thorne fast to a solid antique bookcase and clamped it to the arm of a solid modern constable. The gag was taken away and Thorne looked at Digby with eyes full of hate. "You won't get away with this, professor. I trusted you like a father, and you've sacrificed me. But I'll not pay for your sins. They won't crucify me. I will have justice. I didn't get any from Slater, and I hoped for more from you. But I will have justice."

"Take him away, sergeant." Llewellyn said. And Thorne was led off down the hall, only his words hanging reluctantly behind.

"Don't look so grim, professor. They always do that when you find them out; look around for somebody to blame. When they get caught, they just lose their heads."

Digby smiled faintly. "Tonight, I suppose we both did."

Llewellyn grunted. He saw no need to mix murder and mirth, particularly on Christmas Eve.

"Well, good night, professor. I think I can still get home in time to play Santa Claus for the missus. We'll be in touch."

"Good night, inspector. And Merry Christmas."

DIGBY SHUT THE MANSION DOOR BEHIND HIM. HE NO longer felt very much like Christmas. The snow had begun falling harder, and he thought he could hear the faint, sweet sounds of distant carolling carried on the crisp north wind. It was sad that he'd had to sacrifice Richard like he had, but Slater's removal was so necessary. He was destroying the faculty, destroying the college. And Digby was the only one who could right the rot. Within a week or ten days, he expected to be offered the chair as interim head. It would be good to move back to the manse where he rightfully belonged.

Digby pulled his muffler tightly round his throat and trudged slowly off towards the meagre light that still burned in his window. ●

MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAKERS

PETER A. SELLERS *(Loss of a Faculty)* tells us:

> I am not related to the late actor, although occasionally, on bad days, I have been known to impersonate Inspector Clouseau.
>
> For the past four years, I've been an advertising copywriter, and my work has won awards both in Canada and the United States. I've also had several articles appear in magazines and newspapers. And, while I've been writing fiction almost since I first learned to spell, the publication of *Loss Of A Faculty* marks my first foray into professional story telling.
>
> I was born and raised in Toronto, where I still live with my wife Rochelle and a large and eclectic library. I'm 27 years old and received my honours degree in English in 1978. From a college in Toronto similar in many ways to Blackstock. Although, to the best of my knowledge, the faculty members are not as brutally frank in expressing their feelings towards one another.

THRILLING ACTION...
DASHING ADVENTURE!
As the "King" of cartoon heroes springs to life on the screen. A great new adventure, bringing him face to face with a desperate band of espionage agents bent on destroying this continent
Based on the newspaper cartoon sensation!
ZANE GREY'S
KING of the ROYAL MOUNTED
ALLAN LANE · ROBERT STRANGE
ROBERT KELLARD · LITA CONWAY
HERBERT RAWLINSON
A REPUBLIC SERIAL IN 12 CHAPTERS

He hated spiders. They were everywhere he looked—and, worse, places he didn't look. A horrible suspicion began to form in his mind: maybe the spiders hated him back!

Spiders

by BUZZ DIXON

MARVIN TESICH'S FOOT TRAPPED THE SPIDER TIGHTLY against the rough concrete driveway. For a single split-second the spider bore Marvin's full weight, then collapsed. Like a grape crushed by an elephant, the spider's vital organs burst asunder.

Marvin ground his foot atop the spider, shredding it. Its legspan was less than half an inch. Marvin was five-two.

Scraping his foot first on a clean stretch of walk, then on the grass, and finally on the rubber welcome mat outside his front door, Marvin shuddered with revulsion. Damn spiders. Why did God make them?

Nibbling nervously at the small scar on his lip, Marvin slipped off his shoes. He carried them gingerly to the kitchen where he set them on a neatly folded old newspaper. Gotta clean those shoes, get that spider juice off, he thought.

Marvin Tesich loathed spiders. He bought his house to get away from slovenly apartment landladies. How could anybody live in the same building with spiders?

He checked his mail (all addressed "occupant") and answering machine (blank hum) before stripping for a shower. He stood before his mirror, lying to himself, seeing a tall, tough, muscular jock in place of the scrawny thirty-six-year-old accountant with thinning hair and a pathetic mustache.

Ought to call Jenny, he realized. Afternoon shift at K-Mart is getting off now.

Pulling on a bathrobe (even in his own house he never felt comfortable nude), he dialed her number. Six months it's been, he told himself. If she doesn't start putting out soon, I'll dump her and look for a new chick.

That lie was as big as his performance before the mirror.

Jenny finally answered the phone, her voice edgy with tension and fatigue. "Martin, is that you?"

"Yeah, sweetie. How did you know?"

"Oh, come *on,* Marvin! Every day you call to ask where I want to go."

"Okay, so where do you want to go?"

Jenny sighed. "Marvin, no matter where *I* want to go, we always end up going where *you* want to go. A hamburger, then a movie, then a cup of coffee, then you take me home."

Marvin smirked. "So do something different. Invite me in. Or come over here."

"Geeze, Marvin, were you born with a one track mind or what? I'm not that kind of girl. I'm not going to bed unless I'm married or really, really in love with somebody."

Hopes temporarily dashed, Marvin didn't press the matter. Jenny's morals were as firm and as lower middle class as she was. "Okay, okay," he said. Then, "So where *do* you want to go tonight?"

Jenny sighed. "I suppose we could go for a hamburger, then see a movie, then have a cup of coffee."

"Terrific. See you at seven. Bye, honey."

"Yeah, sure," Jenny mumbled as he hung up.

Marvin stripped off his robe. He opened the shower door then shrank back in horror.

There, scuttling about on the gleaming white tile basin, was a small black spider.

Marvin didn't know if it was a black widow or not. Certainly *looks* like one! He wadded up a yard of toilet paper, carefully tracked the spider, then smashed it with as much force as his thin arm could muster. The spider's body popped under the impact. Just like an acne pimple, he thought with a grin and a shudder.

"To hell with you!" he muttered, biting the scar on his lip. "Pretty funny when I was a kid, huh? Gotcha now, gotcha now!" He flushed the tissue and the mangled spider down the toilet. Pulling his robe on again (shaking it vigorously to make sure no spiders had crawled in it), he rushed to the kitchen for scouring powder. He scrubbed the tile basin until every last atom, every last iota, of spider juice was gone.

By then it was too late for a shower before the date. Pulling on clean clothes, Marvin sniffed his underarms carefully, then generously splashed manly cologne on himself to mask his weak odor.

Mustn't be dirty, he chided himself. Dirt draws flies, flies attract spiders. Can't have that, no.

THE DATE, LIKE ALL THEIR DATES, FLIRTED WITH DISaster. While neither Marvin nor Jenny had a *bad* time, neither had a *good* time, either.

Jenny dawdled over her second cup of coffee, yawning as Marvin pontificated on the film they'd just seen. Jenny was a big girl, almost plump, with stringy blonde hair and a peasant's face. She stirred her coffee listlessly.

"Always movies," she complained. "Why don't you talk about something else?"

Marvin stopped in mid-sentence. "We go to movies so it only follows I talk about 'em!"

"Yeah, but do we *have* to go to the movies? Every night?"

Marvin shrugged. "Where do you want to go?"

Now Jenny shrugged. Her job didn't call for much imagination. With Marvin, neither did her social life. "I dunno. Maybe dancing—"

"Music's too loud."

"Some places have big band dances."

"And hang around a bunch of old farts? No thanks."

"Walking in the park?"

Marvin shuddered. There were spiders in the park. The thought of them brought back horrifying childhood memories. "No," he said through gritted teeth.

Jenny shrugged, sighed, and finished her coffee. She stubbed out her cigarette on the saucer. "Okay, so what do you want to do?"

Marvin shrugged. "It's up to you, Jenny. What do you want to do tomorrow?"

She shook her head. He always steered them back to the same old thing. "Well . . . I guess we could have a hamburger . . . then go to a movie . . . then have a cup of coffee . . ."

MARVIN DROVE HOME JAUNTILY, SMIRKING TO HIMSELF. Almost tonight, he thought. Yessir, almost tonight.

He had driven Jenny home and parked in front of her apartment house. They'd kissed for a few minutes, Jenny letting him fondle her breasts over her bra and blouse. Then Marvin gently slid one hand up her inner thigh to touch her panties. She let it stay there for a few moments. When he tried to rub her she pulled away. "No. Not that." Then she got out of the car and went inside.

Almost tonight, Marvin thought, walking up his driveway with a lively spring in his step. Just another couple of months and I'll have her in the sack.

He bounded up his steps, then recoiled in shock. Something had brushed against his face—something thin, tough, and sticky.

A single strand of a spider's web.

Marvin's bowels contracted. He sucked in his breath as he fought for control, gingerly nearing his porch, looking for the spider in the pale door light. "Son of a bitch. Dirty little eight-legged son of a bitch. Where *are* you?"

A tiny flicker of motion caught his eye. A small black spider, almost as black as anthracite, scurried down a post on the front porch. Marvin kicked at it, missing the first time, smashing it the second. Still, he kept kicking it and kicking it, smashing it beyond recognition.

"Damn spider," he said, his voice almost a sob. He rubbed his shoes on the porch, then on the rubber mat, then slipped them off as he stepped inside.

I hate spiders, he told himself as he took off his shoes to join the other pair on the newspaper. He flipped on the kitchen light and jumped back half a step.

A small black spider perched on the tongue of the first pair of shoes.

"Shit!" said Marvin. "The house is infested!"

I can't stay here, not with those damn spiders. Gotta get some clothes, stay in a motel tonight. But what if they're in the closet? Lurking, waiting for me to step in so they can drop on me from the molding?

His first memory returned unbidden: running into a spider's web when he was three.

He hastily left in his stocking feet. Gotta do something! The house lights blazed as he drove away.

JENNY'S VOICE WAS SLEEPY BUT IRRITATED AS HE RANG her bell again and again. "Yes? What? Who is it?"

"Marvin."

"Marvin? It's after midnight!"

"I've got to see you."

A pause, then suspiciously, "Why?"

Marvin nibbled on his scar. How much do I tell her? She knows I don't like spiders, but if she knew how deep that loathing runs, would she think of me in sympathy or as being weak or crazy?

"I got bugs in my house," he said at last.

"Bugs? Everybody's got bugs."

Marvin swallowed drily. "A whole lot of bugs, Jenny."

"Call an exterminator."

"I will . . . tomorrow. I need a place to sleep tonight."

"Well . . . I don't know. How many bugs?"

Before he could check himself, he blurted out, "A couple of spiders, at least."

Jenny's voice was icy when she spoke again. "Two spiders? You woke me at one in the morning to complain about *two* spiders? You really take the cake, Marvin. Go to a motel. Call an exterminator in the morning. Don't bother me again. Good night!"

She clicked off. Marvin buzzed her several times. No response. Dejected, he went back to his car.

THE NEXT MORNING, AFTER SEVERAL CALLS AND MUCH wheedling, Marvin found an extermination company that would come out immediately. Their truck was a battered white pick-up, with pipes and hoses and accouterments of their trade hanging from it like a refugee family's belongings. The two exterminators were a father and son team, Old Mike and Young Mike, the Poulakais. Marvin nervously paced his driveway while Old Mike inspected the crawlspace under the house. Young Mike, a human ox crammed into a faded green football jersey, sat on the fender of their truck, sipping an Orange Nehi and looking at Marvin disdainfully. Probably thinks I'm a wimp, Marvin thought. As if to answer telepathically, Young Mike smiled, then looked away.

Old Mike crawled out, knocking dust from his dirty grey overalls. Bits of spider-web clung to his patchy white hair. Marvin shuddered but Old Mike didn't seem to mind. He grinned a blackened, gap-toothed smile while calculating on the back of a grimy envelope.

"Yes, sir, spiders you got," he said, not stopping his frantic scribbling for a moment. "Lots of spiders. Other bugs, too. Maybe even termites."

"I'm not concerned with the other bugs," said Marvin. "Only the spiders. How much to get rid of them?"

Old Mike grinned inanely and went back to calculating. "We fumigate, maybe eight hundred—nine hundred bucks."

Marvin bit the scar on his lip. "Is there a cheaper way?"

"Hell, yeah—bash 'em one by one when they crawl out!" Old Mike laughed uproariously at his own joke. Even Young Mike laughed, his voice a dull, soulless guffaw.

Marvin fumed. "Six hundred," he said. "No more."

Old Mike shrugged. "When you're ready to talk the business, you call. My number you got. By the way, that is one hundred and thirty-six dollars for inspection. Unless, of course, you apply against fumigation."

Marvin felt trapped. I gotta get rid of those spiders, but I can't afford the Poulakais' rates.

Jenny drove up in her dinged-up beige Datson. The fair damsel riding to the rescue of the beleaguered knight, Marvin thought wryly.

As she got out, Young Mike and Jenny saw each other at the same time. Young Mike leered slightly. Marvin hurried over to Jenny, putting his arms around her and kissing her. He chose to ignore her long, appraising look at Young Mike.

"Not now, Marvin," she said. "People are watching. What was that scene last night at my place?"

Marvin blushed. Young Mike smirked at his discomfort. "Spiders," Marvin said. "My house is infested with spiders. Can you lend me three hundred bucks?"

"Three hundred? Are you out of your tree, Marvin?"

"Lower your voice, Jenny. I need it for fumigation, Jenny. I can put up most of the money, but I'm three hundred short."

"I don't know, Marvin . . ."

"I'll pay you back."

"Three hundred bucks is an awful lot . . ."

"I'll give you interest, just lend me the money, okay?"

Jenny shifted her ample weight from one foot to the other, clearly reluctant. "Well . . . okay . . . but nothing better happen to my dough, hear? Geeze, I don't know why I'm doing this . . . I'd better not get stiffed."

"You won't, you won't," said Marvin. "Let me deal with this old pirate while you write a check, okay?"

Jenny eyed him petulantly. "I'm gonna regret this, but, okay. My checkbook is in the car."

Marvin turned to Old Mike, who already had the contract out and ready to sign. As Marvin inked his name, he watched Jenny go to her car. As she passed Young Mike, the big lunk winked at her. Jenny

winked back.

MARVIN SPENT THE NIGHT IN A CHEAP MOTEL, SANS Jenny. Before going there he entered his house as Old Mike and Young Mike hung a tattered fumigation tent over it. He checked scrupulously for spiders in his chest of drawers and closet, then on his personal toilet items.

Seeing they were all untouched, he quickly packed then headed for the motel. Old Mike waved to him as he drove off. "You back tomorrow, they be all dead. This good for whole year, you bet. No more problems."

"I hope not," Marvin muttered. Then he drove off.

A MONTH LATER, MARVIN WAS SATISFIED WITH THE Poulakais' work if not their prices. There was not a spider, bug, insect, or creepy-crawly anywhere. After the fumigation, Marvin had gingerly searched every square inch of the house before finally relaxing.

He was spending more time at home. Jenny didn't want to go out as often as they used to. "Save your money so you can pay me back," she said pointedly on their last date.

Fine, he thought. Tonight I'll prop back in my easy chair, sip oolong tea, and listen to the Osmonds.

The spider dropped right on his glasses.

Marvin shrieked and threw his bifocals off, diving off his chair in the opposite direction. He braced himself against the wall, trying to force his breathing to slow down. The shock made his heart pound in his chest like a caged beast trying to break its bars.

When he finally calmed himself, he groped blindly for his glasses, cursing the Poulakais under his breath. "Some year-long warranty," he muttered.

He picked up his glasses, peering at them nearsightedly. He almost dropped them again when he saw a thin white line running across a lens—a web strand.

He washed them under scalding hot water with soap in the kitchen. He put them on, then went looking for the spider with a rolled up newspaper.

He couldn't find it.

Frustrated, he took out the Poulakais' card and called them. They were closed for the night. He searched the phone book and found their home number.

Young Mike answered the phone, his tongue thick and uncultured. "Yeah? Whaddya want?"

"This is Mr. Tesich," Marvin said. "You sprayed my house for spiders a month ago."

There was no response. Marvin thought the line was dead. "Hello?" he asked.

"Yeah?"

"I said, you sprayed my house for spiders and told me I had a year-long warranty. Well, I found a spider just now."

Another long pause. Marvin was about to speak again when Young Mike said, "So?"

"So I want you to honor your contract," Marvin said, his voice driven by fear of the spiders and anger at the Poulakais. "I want you out here tomorrow to spray the place again."

Several moments passed before Young Mike said, "Can't do that."

"Why not?"

"Got other houses to do."

"You'd better find time to do my house! I'll be waiting for you first thing in the morning—if you're not here I'll take you to small claims court."

Young Mike laughed, his hoarse chuckle saying "So what?" much more eloquently than words. Before Marvin could speak again he hung up.

MARVIN SPENT A SLEEPLESS NIGHT, WAITING FOR THE spider to return. It didn't. He fixed breakfast at dawn and waited impatiently for the Poulakais. It was nearly noon when Old Mike drove up.

"My son says you got bug problems."

"Spider problems. I found one last night."

"Well, one spider ain't so—"

"I have a one year warranty on this fumigation. Live up to your contract!"

Old Mike looked at him resentfully but didn't argue. With a shrug he pulled on his overalls and crawled under the house.

He came out a few minutes later. "Mister, you got bugs on the brain. Ain't no spiders down there—no nothing."

Marvin sucked in his breath then said, "A spider dropped on me last night—scared me half to death."

"One teensy spider—"

"That's not the point! You said no spiders for a whole year! Now do something about it or I'll see you in court!"

Old Mike glared at Marvin as if he was a bug in dire need of stepping on, then turned away. "Okay. I'll spray."

TWO DAYS LATER, MARVIN REACHED FOR HIS TOOTHbrush to brush his teeth before going to bed. He picked it up and noticed the glossy black spider sitting on the bristles like a wart. It jumped on his knuckles, ran across his wrist, and up his arm.

Marvin screamed, dropping the toothpaste tube. As he frantically tried to brush the spider from his arm, Marvin stepped on the tube, squirting paste across the bathroom floor. The air filled with the smell of peppermint. The big black arachnid almost reached Marvin's face before he knocked it away.

It scampered across the floor, dashing to the toilet. Gulping air, Marvin chased it, smashing at it with his heel. It zig-zagged through the toothpaste, dodging Marvin's repeated blows. Marvin's foot slipped on the toothpaste. He went down with a crash. The spider dashed into a tiny crevice at the base of the toilet and disappeared under the house.

This time Old Mike answered the phone. "Those damn spiders are back!" Marvin said, his voice cracking. He struggled to control himself.

"Oh, it's you, Mr. Tesich."

"Damn right it's me! What are you going to do about those spiders?"

Old Mike was silent. When he spoke it was slowly and deliberately, his tone of voice daring Marvin to do anything about it. "Seems to me that the last time I go there I see no spiders."

"One just jumped out at me!"

"First of all, Tesich, spiders are timid. Scared of people. Second, I think you try run up bill on Old Mike. Last time I there, no spiders, I spray anyway. You ain't got no spiders—"

"Then what the hell ran up my arm?"

"Maybe cockroach—"

"A cockroach? Your spraying was supposed to rid my house of *all* pests! Besides, when have cockroaches had eight legs? I—hello?"

There was nothing but a dial tone on the other end of the line; Old Mike had hung up.

Cursing to himself, Marvin slammed the receiver down. I can't call Jenny. She won't let me spend the night with her, especially since I still owe her the three hundred.

I can't afford another exterminator. There is, he realized, only one thing to do. Crawl under the damn house, find the nest of spiders, kill them, then sue those damn Poulakais.

His anger and hate of the Poulakais drove him, greater than his loathing of spiders. Damn those obscene little bastards, he thought, steeling himself up. They're not going to chase me out of my house.

He went to an all night convenience store and bought all their bug sprays and a powerful flashlight. He went to the wire grating covering the crawlspace entrance and breathed deeply, trying to build up his nerve. If I don't go now, I'll never go.

HIS EARLIEST MEMORY CAME BACK TO HIM, AND HE shuddered. He was only three. He was running down a sidewalk in late evening. He didn't see the large spider web strung across the walk. He ran right into it, the sticky strands adhering to his face, the big black garden spider trapped between the web and his skin. He screamed and the spider scrambled into his mouth. He bit down on it, bitter ichor filling his mouth, squirming legs kicking at his tongue.

And the spider bit back, sinking its venomous fangs deep into his soft, tender lip, leaving a bite that swelled up and later burst into a festering sore.

Gingerly, Marvin touched the tiny scar on his lip. He almost changed his mind, but to run from the spiders would be to surrender to them. I'll go after them, face them, kill them.

Pulling free the wire grating, he turned on his light and crawled under the house.

It's not like I imagined at all, Marvin realized. It's dry and dusty. I thought it would be as muddy as a pig-pen.

Shining the light along the dusty ground, Marvin followed the trail left by Old Mike when he checked the house. There were no signs of any insects or spiders. Doesn't make me feel any better, he thought.Then he noticed the circles.

They were arranged in a haphazard pattern, small circles about as wide as a dime clustered about a large, cup sized circle.

Old Mike crawled past them lots of times, Marvin realized, but never noticed them.

Holding the flashlight in one hand and a can of bug spray in the other, he edged nearer to the circles. What *are* they? he wondered.

Then he found out.

First one, then another, then two more, then six, then a dozen, then two dozen, then all of them popped open. Like soldiers who dug themselves into foxholes and pulled the dirt over them, the black widow colony had fashioned air tight burrows to protect themselves from the Poulakais' spray.

Marvin was paralyzed with fear. The spiders hesitated on the edge of their burrows. His hand went limp, dropping the bug spray. The large, cup-sized burrow cover quivered as whatever was beneath it struggled to get out. Marvin's bladder emptied itself involuntarily, forming a wet

puddle around him.

The spiders charged.

Like a wave of hard black pebbles, the black widows ran straight towards him. Marvin screamed in terror and dropped his light. He crawled frantically to the grating, his mind oblivious to everything except escape from the horde of spiders. He scraped his back against wooden beams and jagged, rusty nails, but he didn't care.

He hurled himself out of the entrance, leaving shreds of clothes and skin behind. He grabbed two cans of bug spray and whirled to plaster the entrance with death-dealing chemicals.

No spiders followed him out.

His back stung from a dozen cuts and scrapes. Marvin shuddered, thinking of the horror beneath his house.

He went inside, stripping off his clothes and leaving them in careless, muddied heaps on the floor. He opened his chest of drawers and carefully selected new clothes, making sure no spiders lurked in them.

I can't stay in this house, he realized. I gotta get out. But first I'm gonna handle those damn Poulakais. Still trembling with fear, his voice edged with hysteria, he called Old Mike.

Old Mike had been drinking when he finally answered the phone. "Yeah?"

"You gotta come—they're under my house—thousands of them! Black widow spiders—"

"What? Who is this? Tesich? What the hell you bothering me for, anyway?"

"Damn it, man, my house is infested with spiders! Thousands of them!"

Old Mike took a long draught on his end then said, "You drink too much. Lie down and go to bed."

"No! Come here, right now! You gotta kill 'em!"

"Listen, Tesich, I'm telling you, there ain't no spiders—"

"They live in burrows, you moron! The gas never reached them! There's a whole colony down there!" Old Mike said nothing. This made Marvin even angrier. "If you don't come out here right now, I'll see you're closed down, by God! I'll sue! I'll sue for damages! I'll run you out of business! I'll call the Better Business Bureau and—"

"Okay! Okay! Geeze!" Old Mike muttered some angry and bitter words in his native language then said, "Hold on to your damn shirt, Tesich. I come there."

IT TOOK OLD MIKE AN HOUR TO SHOW UP. MARVIN packed some belongings in a suitcase while waiting. Finally the battered

white truck rolled up in Marvin's drive-way, blocking his car. Old Mike stepped from the cab, pulling his overalls on, barely sober enough to stand. "Okay, where these damn bugs?"

Marvin told him., Old Mike snorted and waved his hand at Marvin. "Nothing but sissy. Spiders ain't never hurt nobody."

He pulled loose the grating. "I better find spiders," he said, "or I be pretty pissed coming out here in middle of night."

"They're down there," Marvin said.

Old Mike burped and crawled under the house. He was silent, then he said, "Can't see a thing." Then, "Okay, so I found the burrows. They ain't black widows. Just trapdoor spiders. Harmless." Then, "Hey . . . wait . . . they *are* black widows! Black widows don't burrow!" Then, "My God! Look at the size of *that* one!" Then a sharp cry in his native language. Then, a scream. Then, silence.

He's just trying to scare me, Marvin told himself again and again. He's trying to pull my leg, get revenge for being dragged out in the middle of the night. "It's not funny!" he called down to Old Mike. "I'm not falling for your joke!"

There wasn't a sound from under the house. He's pulling my leg, Marvin kept telling himself as he screwed up his courage to take a look.

Both his flashlight and Old Mike's were lying in the dirt, providing indirect illumination. There was a large mound of tiny jet black glass beads several feet away farom the entrance. Then the beads parted and Marvin saw Old Mike's body wrapped in a cocoon. The beads were black widow spiders and they were heading for him.

Marvin sprayed the entrance again and ran. He jumped in his car and roared away, cutting across his neatly manicured lawn to escape his house. He drove hard and fast, zooming through stop signs without even stopping.

HE DROVE SEVERAL MILES BEFORE THE PANIC LEFT HIM and he began breathing normally again. Gotta do something, go somewhere. Gotta think, decide what to do.

Pulling over at a pay phone, he called Jenny. She answered sleepily. "It's me," he said.

"Marvin?" Her voice was foggy with sleep. "It's almost midnight! Why are you bothering me?"

"I—I've got to see you, Jenny. I need a place to stay."

Now Jenny was fully awake. "No. You can't come here. Not tonight. Not now."

"But, Jenny, I have to!"

"Why?"

Marvin bit at the scar on his lip. How much dare I tell her over the phone? "I—I can't explain," he said. "If I could see you face to face—"

Jenny started to say something, but Marvin never heard the words. Instead, he heard a second voice in the background. A dull, deep, masculine voice, a voice that laughed at him.

Young Mike's voice.

Marvin reeled at this. "What's he doing there?"

Guilty silence, a hand over the receiver. Then Jenny asked meekly, "Who?"

Angry, cursing, Marvin slammed the phone down. He returned to his car, completely shaken.

I can't focus my thoughts. The spiders . . . Old Mike . . . Jenny . . . need time to think, time to reason.

He drove to the same cheap, seedy motel he stayed before. He took his single suitcase inside and plopped it on the bed, opening it to remove a clean set of underwear. I'll shower, wash off the fear and filth. Then I'll call the cops and tell 'em about Old Mike. Let them handle it.

He stripped and entered the grimy shower stall, oblivious to its filth. He scrubbed himelf from head to toe with cheap green motel soap. Stark naked, reeking of cheap pine scent, he padded to the towel rack where he hung his underwear.

He pulled on his jockey shorts, then stopped. Something moved between the fabric and his skin, something small and tiny—like a spider.

He frantically tore off the shorts and threw them aside. Moaning, he reached for his glasses on the sink.

His hand brushed into a spider web. A black widow jumped on his forearm.

Crying out, he brushed the spider off. Bending over, Marvin peered at his glasses. They were surrounded by a spider web. Dozens of spiders ran up and down the web. He reached for his glasses, but held his hand back. I can't, he realized. I can't reach in there.

He backed into the bedroom. He reached for the open suitcase on the bed. He took out a pair of slacks—and hundreds of black widows crawled out of the lining.

He dropped the slacks and staggered back. He ran to the door, reaching for the knob, when he heard an angry hiss.

Perched on the doorknob, like an angry ebon skull the size of a tennis ball, was the matriarch of the black widow colony, a huge black widow spider with legs six inches long. The legs scratched at his hand as

he tried to reach the knob.

"What do you want?" Marvin sobbed. "Why me?"

Though his vision was blurry, he saw a sea of moving black shapes, tiny and glossy in the dim motel room light, swarming towards him. There was no chance to reach the phone.

They must have somehow crawled into my suitcase back at the house, Marvin realized. They're something new—a dangerous mutant that's selected me as a victim. I'm much bigger than they are—I could crush that giant mother spider and make a break for it.

But his fear was bigger than he was.

Naked, afraid, he retreated, brushing into strands of web as spiders dangled from the ceiling. He huddled in the corner as the spiders surrounded him.

Though they never touched him, they hemmed him in with a fine silk web, a net of sticky strands that he could have easily broken through, if he only had the courage.

Instead he cowered, waiting for the spiders to crawl under the cocoon and feast.

And soon enough, they did. ●

BOUCHERCON XV

The
Annual Anthony Boucher
Memorial Mystery Convention

October 26-28, 1984

Americana-Congress Hotel
Chicago

Guest of Honor: Bill Pronzini
Fan Guest: Marv Lachman

Registration for the three-day weekend is $25. Make checks payable to Bouchercon XV and mail to Bouchercon XV, Box 576, Hinsdale, IL 60521.

It was a deadly game they were playing, and anyone who lost was dead!

With Extreme Prejudice

by MICHAEL BRACKEN

LT. COL. EDUARD PAROLDI, A SENIOR OPERATIVE WITH the French secret service, sat in his Peugot 305, nervously tapping his fingers against the steering wheel. He had been parked on the shoulder of the lonely Alpine highway for almost three hours and his stomach was growling. Eduard dug in the pocket of his heavy overcoat for the last bite of a chocolate bar he'd been slowly nibbling at during his wait.

When he heard the crunch of tires on the cold gravel behind him, Eduard glanced up into the rearview mirror and saw the nondescript blue sedan pull to a halt behind his Peugot.

Quickly climbing from his car, Eduard tossed his empty chocolate bar wrapper on the ground. It fluttered away in the breeze.

"It's about time you got here," he said in heavily-accented English.

"I've been waiting half the day."

The double-agent in the other car carefully stepped from the warmth into the cold mountain breeze, raised a Smith & Wesson .357 Magnum, and squeezed the trigger three times.

Blood spattered across the hood of the Peugot 305 as Eduard's body jerked convulsively and crumpled to the ground.

CHRISTIAN GUNN WAS SITTING AT THE BAR SIPPING A GIN and tonic and watching a light, powdery snow fall outside the massive plate glass window at the end of the room when a petite brunette slipped onto the barstool next to him.

"You know," she said, a soft British accent carrying her words, "you look just like James Bond."

Christian turned to face her. "Which one, Sean Connery or Roger Moore?"

"Neither. David Niven in *Casino Royale.*"

He recognized the code immediately, but he didn't change his expression. "Would you care for a drink?"

When the brunette accepted his offer, Christian motioned for the bartender, then ordered a refill for himself and a fresh drink for his contact. While they waited for the drinks, Christian studied her. He'd been expecting the broad-shouldered Frenchman he'd worked with the last time he was in Europe, not the dainty slip of a woman he found sitting on the stool beside him. Christian had never been one to judge a fellow agent's abilities on a first impression, but the brunette beside him was hardly what he had expected MI6 to send after the double-agent who'd assassinated Paroldi.

"My name's Kelly." She brushed her long hair away from her face and reached for the glass the bartender had left before her. "Kelly Francis." She took a slow sip from her drink before asking, "Have you been here long?"

"Since yesterday morning," Christian said. He'd spent the first day scouting out the ski lodge and the modest-sized town a half dozen kilometers down the mountain.

Kelly took another sip from her glass. "I just came in myself," she said. "Do you come here often? I come up quite frequently. The skiing's great."

She was jabbering on. Anyone watching the two agents at the end of the bar would have thought the attractive British woman was in the process of picking up the handsome, muscular American. Before long, they left the bar, arm-in-arm, and made their way laughing and joking up the staircase to her room.

"Okay," Kelly said as soon as she'd locked the door behind them. "I'm sure you were filled in on everything back in the states. Is there anything I can add?"

Christian sat on the edge of the bed and lit a cigarette. He studied the English woman standing on the far side of the room, admiring the swell of her breasts and the curve of her hips, before asking, "Do you ever mix business with pleasure?"

She smiled. "Not often."

Christian took another drag from his cigarette and shrugged. The CIA hadn't sent him halfway around the world just to put the make on a British agent. "So what do you have?"

Kelly moved to a small desk a few feet from the door and quickly rifled through a small brown briefcase. She threw an 8″x10″ photograph on the bed beside Christian. "That's Gunter Schmidt of West Germany."

Christian studied the photo carefully while she spoke.

"He's been working both sides of the street for quite some time. Until recently his only contact with our side was Paroldi. Now Paroldi's dead."

"Why don't the French handle it?"

She snorted. It was an indelicate sound of derision. "The French are fools."

Christian had worked with Lt. Col. Paroldi and the Alpine Affairs Bureau many times in the past and he knew better. Still, he let her comment pass.

The petite British agent paced the room. "The French say that it was a crime of passion. They do not know Gunter Schmidt like I do."

After stubbing out the last of his cigarette, Christian unthreaded his tie from his shirt collar and loosened the top few buttons of his shirt. "I'm sure the French have their reasons," he said.

Kelly stopped pacing when she noticed that Christian's suit jacket and his shoulder holster were casually thrown over the back of the chair next to her bed. "What are you doing?"

"It looks like this is going to be a long night," he said. "I'm getting comfortable." Christian could easily imagine the lithe form under Kelly's dress. "You might want to do the same."

"MI6 warned me about you," she said.

"Yes?"

Kelly shook her head. Her long hair flew in tiny wisps about her bone-china face. "You Americans are all alike."

"I have a job to do," Christian said. "When the time comes, I'll do it. Until then . . . "

"Have you no compassion?" Kelly asked. "Paroldi's dead and you're coming on like a bull in heat."

"Paroldi was a good agent," Christian said as he removed his shirt to reveal the thick mat of hair on his chest and the powerful muscles of his shoulders, "but he made a mistake. I won't make the same one."

"Don't bet on it," the British agent said. "Men are fools."

"And you aren't?"

Kelly stared him straight in the eye. "And I'm not."

Christian kicked off his shoes, then reached down to pull his socks off. Once he had accomplished that, he leaned back against the headboard and stretched out his legs. He was wearing only his slacks.

Kelly continued filling in the background on Gunter Schmidt, finally winding up with, "I expect him here within twenty-four hours. He has to make a drop. The KGB is expecting Schmidt to deliver some microfilm to their agent stationed here."

"How do you know all this?" Christian asked.

"I have a job to do," Kelly said, repeating Christian's comment of a few minutes earlier. "I do it well."

The room was silent for a moment, then she said, "You are a persistent man, Mr. Gunn. Do you always get what you want?"

Christian smiled. "Always."

He sat up and took Kelly's hand, pulling her across the bed.

LATER SHE ASKED, "ARE ALL AMERICAN AGENTS AS GOOD as you?"

It was a double-entendre and Christian knew it. "Not many," he answered. "That's why they sent me."

Kelly Francis rolled onto her side, facing away from the American agent. She still had a smile on her face as she fell asleep.

She was snoring lightly as Christian pulled on his clothes. After slipping quietly out of the room, Christian made his way down the hall, up the staircase, and down another hall to his own room.

He slid his key into the lock, twisted the knob, and swung the door open. As he stepped into his room and searched for the light switch, a voice said, "Do not turn the light on, Mr. Gunn."

The voice came from the far side of the room, but Christian could not pinpoint its source immediately.

"Come inside and close the door, please."

Christian followed directions. He could feel the weight of his sidearm under his left armpit and he carefully weighed the odds of reaching for it.

"Your reputation precedes you, Mr. Gunn." The voice was harsh

and guttural.

"Yes?" Slowly Christian's eyes were becoming accustomed to the darkness of the room. He could just barely define the silhouette of a man sitting in the chair next to his bed.

Then the light snapped on and Christian blinked at the sudden brightness.

"The problem with you Americans," said the man in the chair, "is that you do not know who your friends are."

"And who are they?" Christian asked. As he became accustomed to the light he recognized the face of Gunter Schmidt.

Schmidt smiled slowly. "We could play games all night, could we not?"

Christian agreed.

"But there is no need, is there?"

The German agent had no visible weapons, but Christian knew better than to underestimate an opponent. He was at a disadvantage, but he knew there would be plenty of time to take care of Schmidt.

"Many agents have died," Schmidt said evenly. "Agents on all sides."

Christian nodded. Eduard Paroldi hadn't been the first. And if Christian did his job properly, Paroldi wouldn't be the last.

"This could go on for many months," Schmidt said, "with many more senseless killings. Or it could stop right here, right now."

"Are you trying to make a deal with me?" Christian asked. "Because I don't make deals."

Schmidt held up a hand to placate the American. "No deals. Just this: After I leave here tonight, it will be every man for himself."

Christian agreed cautiously.

"Now, slowly draw your weapon from the holster under your arm and toss it gently on the bed between us." After Christian had followed Schmidt's directions, the German agent unloaded the .9mm Luger. Then he tossed the empty weapon on the bed, and said, "Go into the bathroom and close the door. Lock it. I will be gone before you can get out."

Christian followed the German agent's orders, waited until he heard the hotel room door open and close, and then he came back out of the bathroom. As he reloaded his Luger, he considered the German's comments and realized that if Schmidt had had a weapon trained on him, he would have already been dead. The thought tickled his curiosity, but it didn't prevent him from getting a good night's sleep after he'd braced the door closed and double-checked the window locks.

WHEN HE AWOKE THE NEXT MORNING, IT WAS BECAUSE Kelly Francis was tapping lightly at his door. Christian opened it for her and she stepped into his room.

"How soon will you be ready?" she asked. "I think I know where to find Gunter Schmidt."

"Not long," Christian told her. What he didn't tell her was that Schmidt had visited him the night before.

He took a quick shower, rinsing off the night's accumulation of dried sweat. When he stepped from the bathroom, he was wearing a fresh suit and looked every bit the well-kept American businessman out on a business trip.

Kelly took his arm and led him down through the lobby to the parking lot where her car was waiting. Kelly drove, handling the narrow, twisting streets of the Alpine village with the ease of one who has spent many years driving through them. Before long they had crossed town and were parked in a dingy neighborhood, where the cobblestone streets were rough and uneven, filled with potholes. Christian saw no one.

The British agent pointed toward a building at the far end of the street. "He's meeting the Russian in there."

Christian scanned the building and the street approaching it.

"We can go around the block," Kelly continued. "Then we'll separate. I'll cover the front entrance while you slip in the back. Try to flush him into the open."

Christian considered what she was saying, saw no reason not to go along with her plan, and agreed to it.

As they walked down the sidewalk and around the block, Christian held Kelly under his arm, feeling how neatly she fit in the crook of it. At the end of the street they separated.

Leaving Kelly to watch the front door, Christian continued around to the back, carefully making his way through the debris filling the alley. He began to hear sounds as he moved, the sounds of people in the buildings around him, perhaps only now awakening.

At the back door Christian carefully tried the handle. The door was locked as he had expected. He considered kicking it in, then thought better of the unnecessary dramatics. Instead, he bent and carefully picked the lock with one of the tools from his inside jacket pocket.

As soon as the lock snapped open, he replaced the tool in his pocket and drew his Luger from the holster under his left arm. Then he eased the door open and stepped into darkness.

A beefy fist slammed against Christian's wrist, knocking the Luger

away from him. Then the snout of a revolver was jammed into his gut, motioning him backward.

A dozen words in Russian followed, but Christian recognized none of them. The man behind the revolver was short, with a thick torso and broad shoulders. A half dozen more words followed, this time in heavily-accented French.

When Christian Gunn responded it was with action, not words. He shoved his right hand down between himself and the other man, grabbing the revolver and twisting it.

The Russian squeezed the trigger and the hammer snapped shut, catching the tender web of skin between Christian's thumb and forefinger. Christian swore, jerked the revolver out of the Russian's hand, and used the butt of it to slam into the Russian's face.

The thick-set Russian staggered backward, blood spurting from his broken nose. Christian slammed his fist into the Russian's solid jaw and forced him back another step.

When the Russian came back at him, he held a long, thin-bladed knife in his hand, the point of it held so that it could be thrust upward at Christian.

Cautiously, Christian stepped back, pulling the revolver's hammer off of his hand. The Russian stepped in close, planted a heavy boot on Christian's arch, and brought the blade within inches of Christian's hip.

Christian spun away, tried to bring the revolver up to fire, but lost his grip on it when the Russian swung a heavy left hand into his face. Christian's concentration never faltered, his eyes warily following the path of the knife blade while trying to determine the Russian's next move.

The Russian stepped in close again, brought the blade sharply upward. Christian caught the Russian's wrist, spun the stocky man around, and planted a glancing blow to the Russian's kidneys. He tried to follow that with a solid blow to the back of the Russian's neck, but missed the chance as the Russian stepped out and away from him.

They stood a few feet apart, their attention on one another, and they didn't notice as Kelly Francis slipped through the other door into the room with them.

"A stand-off?" Christian said.

"Da," the Russian replied. Then he thrust again, the blade slicing through Christian's jacket sleeve, drawing a long line of blood down the length of his forearm.

When he spun away from the Russian, Christian stumbled backward over a low stool, and fell onto his back. As the Russian advanced on

Christian, Kelly stepped from the shadows with a heavy revolver in her hands, the long nose of a silencer pointed at the Russian.

A look of surprise swept over the Russian's face and he spat out a few words in his native tongue, a look of relief passing across his features before a trio of lead mosquitos buzzed from Kelly's revolver and drilled through his chest.

The Russian crumpled to the floor in a pool of his own blood.

Christian scrambled to his feet, retrieved his Luger, and followed the sexy British agent out the door.

"Schmidt wasn't there," she told him as they hurried down the street to the parked car. "I checked the other rooms."

In the car, Christian wrapped his arm as best he could with a handkerchief, stemming the flow of blood until Kelly could get him to a doctor.

"How did you know he was supposed to be there?" Christian asked.

"I have connections around the city. I keep my ears open."

"What about the Russian. How did he know we were coming?"

She shrugged and glanced at him as she negotiated the twisting streets. "He did not expect us," she said. "He was supposed to meet Gunter Schmidt there to receive the microfilm."

"But we arrived too early and broke up the party?"

"Yes," she said. "That's it. We should have waited."

After a doctor had wrapped Christian's arm in bandages, and had given him a shot of medication, they headed back toward the resort hotel.

"What will Schmidt do now that his contact is dead?" Christian asked.

Kelly shook her head. "I don't know. I can only guess."

"And?"

"He'll leave town as soon as he discovers the Russian is dead. He's got no reason to stay, no one to pass the microfilm on to."

"So you don't think anything will happen tonight?"

"No. Nothing. He knows we've caught on to him."

Christian slumped back in the seat of the car and road in silence. Finally he broke it by saying, "I do not like to play games."

She laughed it off. "Americans!"

THE REST OF THE DAY WAS QUIET, THE TWO AGENTS spending most of it in the bar sipping at drinks and watching the skiers through the massive plate glass window at the end of the room. When Christian finally excused himself and made his way up to his room, he was sure of only one thing: someone was trying to set him up.

He carefully let himself into his room when he noticed that the paper match he'd left in the doorframe was missing, discovering that his only visitor had been a maid.

As he began undressing for the night, Christian remembered the previous night, with Kelly's British body pressed tightly against his, and her offer in the bar just before he'd come upstairs. Then Christian pulled his jacket back on and made his way down the hall, down one flight of stairs, then down another hall.

As Christian approached Kelly's room, he heard the faint sounds of fighting. He drew his .9mm Luger from his shoulder holster and kicked the door open. Gunter Schmidt had the petite British agent backed up against the wall, a knife at her throat. Her dress had been ripped half off and one firm breast hung free and exposed, a thin line of blood across it. Gunter looked no better; his face was bleeding where her nails had torn away the skin.

Christian leveled his Luger and shouted. The two combatants froze, then Gunter stepped back away from the British agent. Gunter dropped the bloody knife to the carpet and eyed the bed. Only inches from the two of them lay a Smith & Wesson .357 Magnum.

The three agents stood in a wary triangle. Christian Gunn was the apex and he knew that any moment he would have to make a decision. He had been given orders to find Paroldi's killer and to terminate with extreme prejudice.

"Kill him," Kelly Francis said harshly.

Christian squeezed the trigger of his Luger. Blood spattered the wall as the British agent dropped to the floor, dead. Her long brown hair fluttered into place around her lifeless bone-china face.

Christian had never killed a woman before, but as he thought of the way Eduard Paroldi had died by her hand, he understood why the gendarmes had thought it a crime of passion.

Gunter Schmidt stood where he was. "Perhaps you Americans are not so stupid," the German agent said. "How did you know it was her?"

Christian returned the Luger to the holster under his left arm. "The Russian," he said. "She had us all playing against each other. She doublecrossed the Russian, hoping to secure her connection to me to better get you. It didn't work—I saw his eyes when he recognized the double cross." ●

George's parole officer was sure he wouldn't make it, that he'd be sent back to prison. And now it looked as though the man might be right!

The Bus Bandits

by RAY BRADLEY

GEORGE AND MICHAELA WERE IN LOVE, AND THEY wanted to get married. When they had met six months ago at the lunch-counter where Michaela worked waitressing, George had been stone broke and out of work, and Michaela had been very sweet and encouraging. But now George had a job, working in a warehouse lit with dim yellow bulbs and smelling strongly of exhaust fumes. And he and Michaela were going to get married pretty soon.

He rode the bus to work every morning—5:30 AM, take the #56 to Milwaukee Rd., change at Canal Street for West Madison. George usually took a thermos of coffee, which he shared with Red, the bus driver, who sometimes bought doughnuts, and overall things seemed to be going along pretty well. But then a terrible thing happened: the bus was robbed.

These three guys got on, two of them going way to the back to sit down while the third one bought a transfer from Red and sat down up front, acting like he didn't know the other guys at all. Then two stops later Mr. Petrakis got on, as usual, with his fat black satchel, and the next thing anyone knew, these three guys were waving guns around, the

one up front hollering that Red should pull the bus into an alley just ahead.

They took everybody's wallet, except for one lady who fainted, but Mr. Petrakis wouldn't give up his black satchel. "No! No!" he shouted, very red in the face and angry, his grey, spiky hair quivering he was so agitated. He held the satchel tight against his chest with both arms while one of the bandits tugged at the handle, until finally another bandit—a tall, dark man with one gold earring—beat Mr. Petrakis over the head with his pistol until the blood gushed out and the old man sank limp to the floor. Then the robbers took the satchel and ran.

Later, George talked to the policemen for a few minutes and afterwards went to work, thinking how lucky he was they hadn't stolen his lunchbucket, which was worth more probably than his wallet with everything in it. He got through his day's work okay and that evening when he got back to his rooming house, Michaela was waiting for him in the hallway.

"I heard on the radio," she said, "and I knew that was your bus number. I got so worried, I came over." They kissed affectionately. "There's someone waiting to see you," she told him, "in your room."

"A policeman?"

"No, it's Mr. Weber."

Mr. Bernard Weber was George's parole officer, and he did not like George at all. Or rather he had absolutely no confidence in him. "You won't make it, George. You will screw up somehow," he would tell George angrily, as if George were deliberately wasting the taxpayers' money and Mr. Weber's time with his foredoomed efforts to succeed in the outside world. "I will end up sending you back to the joint, I just know."

And now, when George came into his room, Mr. Weber glared fiercely at him and said, "The city police been asking me about you, George."

"What about, Mr. Weber?" George hung his coat and hat up on a peg.

"About that bus thing this morning. You know, Mr. Petrakis there, the old man they beat up, he had a satchel full of rare coins he was carrying to his business, they took away from him."

"He carried that satchel every day."

"And you knew it was full of coins?"

George shrugged. "I knew he ran some kind of hobby shop."

Mr. Weber wrote something down on a little note pad he'd been holding in his hand. "Those bandits there, did you ever see any of them before?"

George thought a moment. "I don't believe so."

"Not ever? Better be certain."

"Not ever I can think of."

Mr. Weber made another note.

"What do you suppose he's getting at?" George asked Michaela later.

"I think the police suspect you of setting Mr. Petrakis up to be robbed." Michaela frowned. "Because you knew his routine and everything."

George nodded sadly. "They naturally suspect things like that when they find out a guy's done time." He laughed half-heartedly. "Lucky for me they can't lock you up for what they suspect." He laughed again.

BUT HE HAD TROUBLE SLEEPING THAT NIGHT, THINKING about those three bandits, especially the tall, dark man with the gold earring. Hadn't George seen him somewhere before? It was so brutal, the way he'd beaten Mr. Petrakis. George had seen things like that in prison of course, but never since. It was very disturbing.

He woke up in a cold sweat and telephoned Michaela at her mother's house. "Maybe you should stay home from work today," she advised him. "I'll call and tell them you're sick, okay?"

"Okay." George made himself some hot cocoa and watched the Morning Farm Report on TV. Then he fixed cereal and toast and watched Captain Kangaroo, preferring the company (just now) of the genial, chubby captain to that of the lean, intense news commentators he would normally watch. Then about eleven o'clock he began warming some scotch broth on his little stove.

AND ABOUT ELEVEN-FIFTEEN THERE CAME A KNOCK AT his door. Hoping it was not his boss come to check up on him, George opened the door just a crack. "I got to talk to you, sucker." It was the tall, dark man with one gold earring.

Heart instantly pounding, George tried to slam the door shut, but the man jammed it open with his big foot. For a full half minute the two of them pushed frantically at opposite sides of the door, each breathing harshly, muttering and straining. Then, very suddenly, the man withdrew his foot so the door slammed shut, throwing George off balance, then kicked the door open, knocking George backwards all the way across the little room. "What did you tell them about me?" he demanded.

"Nothing! Not a thing! I don't even know you," shouted George.

He was sitting on the floor in front of the stove where his soup was heating.

"You don't remember we was in the joint together? You don't remember my name?"

"No I don't . . . didn't!"

The man stepped heavily into the room. "You didn't, but you remember now, huh?"

George could have bitten his tongue: he had said the wrong thing. For he did remember. All these months since his release, George had worked to blot out his prison memories, but now he remembered. This guy was "Big Woody" Grayson, who had knifed a guy in the joint once just for a pack of cigarettes and done a lot of other vicious things.

Slowly George got to his feet as the monstrous dark man came towards him, shoving George's little table and chair out of the way. His arms were long and muscular. His hands were huge, stubby-fingered and hairy. "What did you tell them, sucker?"

"Told them nothing." George's back was to the wall, between the stove and the tall front window.

"Nothing, huh?" The man pulled open the window, letting in a rush of cold air. "Long way down to the pavement, sucker." He gripped George's left arm very firmly and began pulling him towards the window.

George was so scared his teeth began to chatter. With his free hand, he picked up a soup pan and bashed it against the side of the man's head. 'Ow!" Letting go of George's arm, the man raised his hands reflexively to his temples. Then George rapped the cast-iron pan across his forehead. "Ow! Oh!" The man pressed his hands to his forehead, trying to stem the flow of bright, red blood.

Taking the pan handle with both hands now, George pounded the utensil repeatedly against the man's right ear, then stepped aside as the snarling hulk lunged blindly towards him and fell out the open window.

"Holy cats!" whispered George as he shut the window. He'd never intended, never at all, that the man should die.

"THEY FOUND A DEAD GUY OUT IN FRONT OF YOUR BUILDing," Mr. Weber told George that afternoon. "He didn't have any ID on him, and the police would like to know who he was. Suppose you could tell them?"

"No, sorry. Wish I could."

Mr. Weber shrugged. "Well, I guess they'll have to list him John Doe. Too bad, though. He might have friends who are worried about him; they'll never know what happened."

"Yeah," agreed George thoughtfully. "Too bad."

Later George noticed a car parked across the street from his rooming house—a shabby brown Chevy with black-wall tires and one man sitting in the front seat. Two hours later, when he looked again, the same car was there, but with a different man sitting in it. And about four o'clock, the car's color had changed to grimy blue, though still with the black-walls and this time Mr. Weber himself in the front seat. "The parole officers are watching me," he told Michaela on the phone.

"Can they do anything to you, George? After all, you're innocent."

"Sure I am. But if Mr. Weber things I'm guilty, and his men see me committing any little transgression—like maybe jaywalking or spitting in public—they'll revoke my parole and I'll be back in the joint for seven years, three months." Which was how much time he had left on his sentence. "Worst thing is, I've been thinking, and I believe I know who the other two bus bandits were. But if I turn them in now, Mr. Weber will think I knew all along and he'll revoke my parole anyway for concealing knowledge of a felon." George sighed. "Either way, I'm in the joint."

"There must be some way out for you, George."

"Yes, there must be. I've just got to think of it."

JEROME MAYFIELD SAT WITH HIS LITTLE BROTHER IN A booth at the back of the restaurant where he could see everybody and everything. The place was crowded, it being six in the evening, and crowds made him nervous. Reaching inside his coat, he shifted the heavy pistol in his belt so that the butt didn't press so uncomfortably against his stomach.

"You remember what this 'George' dude looked like?" his little brother asked him.

"Not too good. His voice sounded familiar when he called on the phone just now, but what he looked like, I don't remember." Jerome's eyes swept the faces at the counter, but no one looked like anyone he'd known in prison. "These people seem like plain old squareheads to me."

"Yeah, me too." His little brother hadn't been in prison himself, but he'd listened to Jerome and Big Woody enough, he knew what squareheads were.

The phone behind the counter rang, and an energetic blonde waitress paused to answer it. Tired of waiting, Jerome rose to his feet and put his coat on.

The waitress looked around the room. "Jerome Mayfield!" she shouted above the clatter of dishes and the buzz of conversation. "Is

there a Jerome Mayfield here?"

"Better answer her," said the little brother, "before everybody here got your name memorized."

Jerome walked to the counter. "I'm Mayfield. Give it here." She handed him the phone. "Yeah?" he growled into the receiver.

"Jerome? This is George."

"Where you at? You told me before that you'd meet us here."

"I know, but I can't. It's my parole, you know, if I'm seen with guys like you."

Jerome lowered his voice. "Yeah, so . . . can't you just tell me right now what you got to say about Woody?"

"Well, I got to thinking, I remembered you and he were best buddies in the joint. I thought you might be worried about him."

Jerome laughed sharply. "I never have to worry about Woody. He's the meanest dude in this city."

"He was the meanest dude, Jerome. *Was.*"

"What you mean?"

"I mean he came looking for me today and now he's dead."

Jerome was stunned.

"You want to know more, meet me in the alley off Milwaukee Road, north of Canal Street. Fifteen minutes."

It was the alley where Woody, Jerome, and little brother had robbed that bus. "I'll be there." Jerome hung up the phone, gave the waitress a couple of dollars, and, motioning for his little brother to follow him, hurried out the door.

After the two men had left, the waitress walked casually to the far end of the counter. "So what do you think?" she asked a red-headed man whose overcoat concealed a brown bus-driver's uniform.

"Those are the guys, Michaela. No doubt about it."

"I'll call George and tell him he guessed right."

"And tell him to be careful, too. Those are two dangerous fellas."

IT WAS A CHILL DECEMBER NIGHT, WITH AN ICY WIND blowing in off the lake, stirring up little clouds of cinder dust along the railroad tracks and pushing stray leaves of weathered newspaper down the street towards the canal. He watched unobserved as the suspect parolee disappeared into the dark, unwholesome shadows of the alleyway and then, using the same phone booth where the suspect had been making and receiving calls for the past half hour, Mr. Weber requested some backup from the police department.

Why had George returned to the scene of his crime, Mr. Weber wondered. Had he left behind some incriminating evidence? Or was it

just his guilty conscience, some impulse of the criminal mind? Mr. Weber didn't know for sure, but he intended to find out.

When a patrol car at last arrived, Mr. Weber told the two officers to wait at the mouth of the alley, then entered the darkness himself, hugging the dank factory walls where he could, or creeping slowly around the crowds of garbage cans and heaps of refuse. If there had ever been a security light in this alley, it had burnt out or been shot out, so that the only source of light was the bright glow of street lamps at the far end of the alley, a long city block away. Mr. Weber peered into the darkness, looking for George, but he couldn't see him.

Or hear him. The alley seemed deserted, though he knew very well, from keeping an eye on the illuminated square of the far end, that no one had gone out since he had come in. George must be in here somewhere: Mr. Weber had just lost track of him.

When he had come about halfway up the alley, Mr. Weber paused beside the looming shape of a large steel dumpster, one of those heavy-duty industrial models reeking of aged-in-the-can garbage.

The smell made him cough.

"Is that you, George?" asked a quiet voice from somewhere in the darkness, somewhere pretty close. Mr. Weber held his breath. "George, say something, boy."

Mr. Weber knelt on one knee beside the steel corner of the dumpster and reached inside his trenchcoat for his gun.

And then the boom of a large-bore pistol echoed in the alley and a slug spanged into the dumpster just above Mr. Weber's head.

He flattened himself on the pavement and clawed at the flaps of his coat, trying to get his gun out.

"You missed me, Jerome!" called out a mocking voice, and in reply the heavy pistol fired two or three more rounds, and a smaller pistol let off a couple of shots as well, so that the dumpster rang like a church bell and the ricochets cracked against the factory wall.

Mr. Weber moaned in terror. Though the pavement on which he lay was icy cold, and his limbs trembled with the chill, his flesh was hot and slimy with sweat.

And then he heard the distant wail of sirens—a lot of sirens. And from the mouth of the alley, where he had left the two patrol officers, someone began firing a shotgun in steady, businesslike rhythms at the people who'd been shooting at him.

Mr. Weber lay very still and quiet on the pavement beside the dumpster while, above his head, his assailants traded gunfire with larger and larger numbers of policemen. The alleyway roared and echoed until it was almost deafening, and then, by degrees, the firing

slackened, finally ceasing altogether.

Helicopters came and hovered above the alley with searchlights. The police moved in and Mr. Weber was assisted, weeping and trembling but unwounded, to a warm squad car. His assailants were carried to an ambulance. And several officers spent a few minutes looking around for George Whatsisname, that Mr. Weber claimed to have seen entering the alley in the first place. But he was nowhere to be found: probably he had just walked out the far end, safe and sound, while Mr. Weber was stumbling around among the garbage cans.

AND AFTER ALL THE POLICE HAD GONE, GEORGE climbed out of the heavy steel dumpster and went home. He knew that Jerome and his little brother would be questioned in their hospital beds by police detectives who knew as well as Mr. Weber that a criminal often returns to the scene of his crime. Later on those detectives might get a warrant to search Jerome's pad, where they would no doubt find some or all of Mr. Petrakis's rare coins. And Mr. Weber, when he recovered his emotional stability after tonight's ordeal, would have to realize that George was innocent.

Perhaps, if Michaela agreed, George would invite him to the wedding. ●

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

The following MSMM subscribers have moved and left no forwarding addresses:

JUDGE CRATER

GLEN MILLER

AMBROSE BIERCE

AMELIA EARHART

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of these people, please contact our subscription department as soon as possible!

I ain't got a loose sawbuck to bet on HJ's bangtail, so all I can do is act as a parrot perch. This turns out to be an unfortunate happenstance!

Bird Bank Bingo

by ARTHUR MOORE

"YOU DON'T BET NO BOODLE, YOU DON'T WIN NO BACON," Jonesy says to me while we are shuffling along the street to the bank.

"Turn over the record," I tell him., "I dig that side."

"Honest Jake is a gent," he says, "who can pick a pony. I am sorry, Dubois, but you are tighter than the tutu on a chorus girl's tokus. This here horse race is a solid proposition, which ain't true of some grifts you has grabbed at."

"I ain't got the loose sawbuck to bet," I inform him for the fourth time. Anyway, I am not sold on Honest Jake like he is—*or* the pony. I do not believe HJ's gift of gab will fluster the photo finish. It never has.

Pazaza squawks, "Drop dead, cookie."

"Knock it off," I warn him. Pazaza is a short, green parrot who belongs to Honest Jake and he is sitting on my shoulder. Pazaza, not HJ.

"You could scrape together a couple of plasters," Jonesy nags.

"Yeh, and I could pawn this dumb bird. I could raise enough scratch

to feather a small nest."

JONESY CLUCKS HIS TONGUE BECAUSE WE HAVE BEEN running that route for an hour. HJ has parked the parrot with Jonesy as a hostage on account of Jonesy has loaned HJ beaucoo folding cabbage for the entry fee. HJ is running a bangtail at Temple Park.

According to Honest Jake the oat machine can run like a streak of lightning which has been booted in the butt, and Jonesy is under the spell of the spiel. But then Jonesy has always been a sucker for a sweet-talking snowman and Honest Jake owns a pair of the most talented tonsils since the James boys were reciting their piece to the music of "Empty Pockets In The Old Corral."

Jonesy is built in the shape of a soup spoon—with arms. He has a habit of wriggling his stupid little moustache like a rabbit who is wondering where Easter eggs come from. He hates to walk anywhere but he is too chintzy to call a cab so he hauls me along when he has to deposit the saloon receipts in the First National Geetus Greenhouse.

He also wants an audience because he has got barber blood. I do not say that Jonesy talks too much but his vocal chords are the strongest part of him. All he knows is bartending so he never leans on logic and learning when he explains science, syncopation and outer space. He also plays the ponies and when he handicaps the horses he mixes in numerology. When he expounds this system he sounds like a politician explaining why taxes are going up this year.

However, like I say, he insists I go along with him, only this time I am acting as a parrot perch. Jonesy is afraid to leave Pazaza alone in the saloon; he is worried the bird will run up his phone bill.

WHEN WE REACH THE WAMPUM WORKS JONESY HALTS and glowers at Pazaza and tells me: "Keep this beady-eyed featherhead quiet in the bank, we shouldn't be embarrassed."

I say I will wait outside but he drags me in. He nods and smiles to the bank guard who is a uniformed fossil tottering from one table to the next, dreaming of the good old days with Dewey in Manila Bay.

The bank is not crowded and Jonesy goes to a window and puts the leather bag on the counter which runs the length of the room. It has a window every couple of yards. I stand Pazaza next to him and shield him with my coat. I do not want people to see me with this talking partridge. It is bad enough I am with Jonesy. Pazaza ruffles his feathers at me and cocks a glassy eye at the clerk but he don't say anything dumb, which is a relief.

Jonesy leans on the counter to wait for the teller and gives me more

free advice. "HJ's bangtail is in the second race, Dubois. You still got time to hock your upper plate and get a bet down."

Pazaza squawks, "Drop dead!" and I cover his big mouth with my coat. Jonesy says, "You got ten clamaroonies, I seen 'em."

"That's my next month's rent. Mrs. Sherpy has quit taking IOUs."

"The world is full of finks," he agrees. "But you are making a large error. Put that tenner on Stick Up in the second. HJ says this horse can beat a missile. Wise up, Dubois. This is a sure thing."

The teller comes to the window and Jonesy unloads the bag. While they are fiddling with slips I find a scratch pad and jot down the name of the horse.

"Stick Up!" squawks Pazaza, hearing the filly's moniker.

Jonesy nudges me. "Shove some birdseed down his dumb throat."

I pull down my hat and hunch my shoulders, nobody should spot me entering negotiations with a parrot. We are in front of the next window from Jonesy and I reach in my pocket for the seed sack. There is a skinny little teller behind the counter. He has glasses an inch thick. They magnify so much I can see halfway through his head. He is all eyeballs and a round mouth, and he is gawking at the scratch pad.

"Stick Up!" Pazaza squawks again and Jonesy tosses the empty leather bag at me. "Shove 'im in the bag."

I set the bag on the counter and hear the teller say "Yessir." But at the time I don't pay no attention. I am trying to keep Pazaza outta sight under my coat and at the same time not get my finger chewed off.

I remember afterward that the skinny teller is kind of gasping and is the color of a vanilla ice cream cone. He pushes the leather bag at me and I shove the parrot at Jonesy.

"Come on," Jonesy says in a nervous voice. "Let's powder." He tucks the bird under his arm and heads for the exit. I rush out likewise but out of the corner of my eye I notice the teller fall off his stool. I even hear him hit the floor and squish a little.

Naturally I think that is strange but Jonesy is growling at me to hustle and hurry. He is embarrassed at Pazaza's noise and we shove through the door.

"Hey cookie, you're faded!' yells Pazaza on the street.

I say, "I thought Honest Jake was a horse player."

Jonesy wiggles his moustache. "I shoulda locked that featherbrain in the ladies room." He herds us around the next corner before he lets me have a breath.

WE ARE A BLOCK FROM KATZIE'S SALOON WHEN THE sirens start wailing. A prowl car goes screaming past and we stand on

the curb to gawk. Pazaza gives them a cheer.

"Some meathead must have got mugged," Jonesy says and Pazaza rasps in his ear. Jonesy is fed up with the bird. "Cram this squawker in the bag. That'll shut him up."

So I open the bag—and we stare at it. It is filled with federal frogskins! We are gaping at Jacksons and Franklins and they are staring back.

None of us says anything, not even Pazaza. And while we are not saying nothing the fuzz puts the arm on us. They run us to the cophouse and throw us into a cage.

One of the coppers growls, "So how come you t'ought you could get away with it, huh?"

Jonesy's mouth is still on "mumble." I say, "Get away with what?"

"Robbin' the bank," the cop says, and Pazaza sort of laughs.

Another fuzzhead says, "The loot's all here. Frisk 'em for evidence."

They slap our threads and take off our shoes. They even pat down the parrot but they don't find no heaters. One of the flatties is teaching Pazaza to say "guilty" when a plainclothes cop shows up.

The plainclothes type brings in the skinny little teller from the bank. The wisp is white as a gop of library paste and he is minus his cheaters. His eyes are not large anymore. They are teeny squinty things and he peers at us like we are a mile away and heading south. The fuzzie explains that the teller broke his glasses. "But he will know your voices."

"We didn't rob no goddam bank!" Jonesy shouts. He is a righteous citizen rising in his wrath and the cop nudges the teller.

"No, not him," the teller says.

The cop points at me. "You—say something."

"I'm innocent!" I remark fast. "I never had no idea of heisting nothing."

"No, that's not him either," the teller says.

"You've got the bills back." Jonesy says. "This here was all a mistake. There wasn't no stick-up!"

"Stick Up!" squawks Pazaza. "Stick Up, Stick Up!"

"That's him!" screams the teller. "That's the voice!"

Everybody turns and stares at the crooked, sneaky bird who robbed the bank. He just cocks a beady eye at us and leers.

But the judge threw the book at him. ●

Irv was Cedar Grove's first line of defense against bank robbers, and now here he was, looking down the barrel of a gun pointed at him by a bank robber, and he was helpless, unable to prevent his own death!

First Security

by LANE MARSH

IRV MADSEN WAS SUSPICIOUS WHEN HE FIRST SAW THE young man getting out of his big, shiny car with the Illinois plates. Illinois means Chicago, thought Irv, and Chicago means crooks. He eyed the young man up and down, memorizing his features. (Irv's eyes were still razor sharp and his memory for faces infallible, even at age sixty-two.)

But the first words out of the young man's mouth reassured Irv: the young man said, "Pardon me, sir." Even the honor students at Cedar Grove High School couldn't talk more politely.

Irv relaxed and smiled. "What can I do for you, young fellah?"

"You could direct me to the president's office, if you would." He was clean-cut and well-groomed. He wore a grey suit. He even wore a tie.

"I'll do better than that," offered Irv. And he led the young man across the crowded lobby—there must have been five or six depositors lined up at the teller's window—and tapped gently on Mr. Falstaff's door. "A gentleman to see you," he said as he showed the young man in.

Then he went back to his station by the front door.

Irv was, in a sense, Cedar Grove's first line of defense against con artists and bank robbers, since he was the security guard for First Security, the only bank in town. So he had to be ever alert, ever watchful.

He watched the near-sighted old ladies as they bent over the counter, filling out their deposit slips with the leaky pens on the short chains. He watched the weather-worn farmers in their neatly pressed overalls as

they waited in line at the window, patient as so many cattle. He watched the teller, too, since no one was above suspicion.

And he watched the occasional traffic up and down Main Street.

ABOUT TEN MINUTES AFTER THE POLITE YOUNG MAN HAD gone in to see Mr. Falstaff, Irv noticed a middle-aged fat man across the street. He wore dark glasses. His hair was thin and greasy. He had not shaved in several days. His car was a grimy blue sedan with black-wall tires and Illinois plates. And he was sitting in the front seat, with the motor running, just watching the bank.

Irv wrote down the license number. He memorized the ill-shaven face. He watched intently, waiting for the guy to make a wrong move. He even thought about phoning Art Greenaway, the town marshal, but he didn't.

"Excuse me, sir," It was the polite young man again. "I was wondering if you could recommend a motel here in town. It appears I'll have to stay overnight, waiting for my check to clear, and . . . "

"You're opening an account?" Irv made it his business to know all the bank's depositors on sight.

"No, just withdrawing some cash. I'm on a buying trip, and . . . "

"Buying hogs?"

"Yes, and cattle. My first time in the area, and I . . . "

"You found Mr. Falstaff a good man to do business with?"

"Yes, very agreeable. Very efficient, for such a small operation."

Irv winced. "There are fancier banks, I suppose, in the bigger towns, but none more hard-working or friendly or secure."

"Secure?" the young man repeated with a doubtful smile.

"Yes, indeed, secure. I'm on duty every business hour. And our town marshall has his office just down the street."

The young man's smile still seemed doubtful. "I believe I noticed him sitting in the sun by his office door as I came into town. Rather an old fellow, isn't he?"

"Been on the job forty-seven years. Actually shot a man once."

"Kill him?"

"Nope, just wounded. But he says he won't go so easy on the next one."

"Sounds like a dangerous man to have against you."

"Shoot to kill, that's his motto."

The young man seemed deeply impressed by the story, which was almost entirely true. Art Greenaway had indeed shot a man once, but he'd confided to Irv afterwards that he'd never have the heart to do the same thing again. Yet Irv wanted this young fellow to understand that

his funds would be as safe at First Security as in any big-city mausoleum with electronic surveillance and computerized alarms, so he'd stretched the truth a little.

"About that motel?" asked the young man.

"The Bide-a-Wee out on Highway 14 is the best around."

"Thank you kindly."

The young man went out to his big, shiny car and drove away. Across the street, the unshaven fat man drove his grimy blue sedan off in the other direction. But he must have doubled back, because in less than a minute he drove by again, heading the opposite way, after the polite young man.

Irv told Mr. Falstaff he had some important business and walked down the street to the marshal's office.

ART GREENAWAY DIDN'T WEAR A UNIFORM, JUST EVERY-day clothes. And he didn't have a fancy squad car with gold lettering, red lights, and three or four shiny radio antennas. But he had the basic police equipment: a badge, a gun, two sets of handcuffs—and a calm devotion to duty. "What do you suppose is going on?" he asked, when Irv Madsen told him about the polite young man and the unkempt individual who seemed to be following him.

"Well, it could all be coincidence," said Irv drily, "but I doubt it. I believe that the fat man knows this young fellah is a hog buyer and that buyers usually carry quite a bit of cash. It looks to me as if he's followed him all the way from Chicago for the sole purpose of robbing him."

Art Greenaway stroked his long, pointed chin thoughtfully. "That's a good guess, but it's only a guess. It ain't evidence.'

"Maybe so, but you ought to follow up somehow. Let's drive out to the Bide-a-Wee and see if the fat man's lurking around out there the way he was at the bank. That would tell us something."

"All right, we'll do her." Art took his pistol out of the desk drawer and put it in his coat pocket. "Just in case." He spat a confident stream of tobacco juice into his office cuspidor.

THEN THE TWO OF THEM DROVE OUT HIGHWAY 14 IN ART Greenaway's rattling pickup which he used both for police work and for trucking produce from his extensive vegetable gardens. When they got out to the motel, sure enough there sat the fat man in the grimy blue sedan, parked by the driveway entrance. "Now what do we do?" wondered the town marshal out loud.

"Why, you take him in for questioning, of course."

Art shook his head. "I got to have probable cause, or he can sue me for false arrest. And the township can't afford no law suits."

"Art," said Irv slyly, "what's that he's parked in front of?"

"Why it's a street sign. Can't you see?"

"Of course I can. What's the sign say?"

Art peered intently through his thick, steel-rimmed glasses. "It says, 'No Parking—Fire Lane.' Wally Zumstra has been sticking those signs up all over everywhere." Wally was the chief of the volunteer fire brigade.

"Well, then," insisted Irv, "isn't that guy breaking the law?"

A smile of understanding lit up Art's sun-darkened face. "Yes, by grabs, he is." He got out of the pickup and swaggered over to the grimy blue sedan. "Step out of the car, please," he said to the unkempt man, who smelled very strongly of stale sweat and salami sandwiches. "I'd like to speak to you."

"Get lost, old-timer," growled the man.

"I gotta insist."

"I said, beat it," snapped the man.

But Art just took out his pistol and held it under the man's chin.

WHEN THEY GOT HIM BACK TO THE MARSHAL'S OFFICE, the two old friends searched their prisoner up and down. They found a half-empty pack of cigarettes, a leaky cigarette lighter, a key ring jingling with a hundred keys, and a six-shot revolver with a barrel as long as your arm. Art put the keys and what-not on top of his desk, but the gun he put on top of a file cabinet on the other side of the room. And just to be safe, he handcuffed the fat man's right leg to a leg of the desk. "That ought to hold him," he said to Irv. The desk was bolted securely to the floor.

Then they began asking the man questions.

He said he was a detective from Chicago. He said they were obstructing him in the performance of his duties. He got very sullen and began to curse them darkly.

Irv Madsen would have laughed at his story, if it hadn't been so insulting. "If you're a detective, where's your badge?"

"I don't carry one. I'm a private detective."

"Well, where's your wallet, then? Where's your ID card?"

The man lowered his eyes and mumbled something indistinct.

"You'll have to speak up," said Art Greenaway. "We're both old codgers and don't hear so good." He winked at Irv.

"I said my wallet got lifted. They got my handcuffs too."

"Some detective," snorted Irv.

The man shrugged his shoulders. "Nobody's perfect. I've been following this guy night and day for a week now. When he sleeps, I have to stay awake watching. When he's awake, I have to stay awake following him. That kind of routine don't improve a guy's alertness a whole lot. So somebody picked my pocket in a truckstop outside of Fargo."

Irv felt a pang of self-doubt: this fat man's story was so goofy, it might almost be true. "Who is this young man?" he asked. "And why are you following him?"

"He's the most dangerous bank robber in the Midwest. And the insurance companies have offered a huge reward for him." The man tried to look very solemn when he spoke, but somehow his pudgy, unshaven face was incapable of looking anything other than degenerate and insincere.

"Oh horsefeathers!" said Irv Madsen. "Most dangerous robber, my foot!" Irv knew a tall tale when he heard one.

Then from outside and down the street there came the faint but unmistakable "Clang-alang-alang!" of the old alarm bell mounted above the front door of the First Security Bank.

Irv Madsen looked inquiringly at the marshal. The marshal looked thoughtfully at the prisoner. "I don't believe you're a detective," he said to the man, "but I do believe that other fellah's a robber. I believe you and he are in cahoots, and your whole purpose has been to keep Irv and me occupied with fairy tales while your partner was robbing the bank." He handed the second pair of handcuffs to Irv. "Chain this fellah's other leg to the desk. I'm going to stop this monkey business right now." He took his revolver from his pocket and rushed out of the office.

"You two guys are no match for Pretty Boy Gambini," said the fat man. "You better give me my gun and let me help you."

Irv snapped one cuff around the man's ankle. He snapped the other cuff around a leg of the desk and hurried outside.

HALFWAY DOWN THE BLOCK, A SMALL CROWD HAD gathered at the front door of the bank. They were talking excitedly and pointing at the alarm bell, which still clanged away. And the shiny car with Illinois plates sat at the curb, its motor running.

Art Greenaway strode purposefully down the middle of the street, his pistol held loosely in his hand. And Irv trotted after him, trying to catch up. Then the bank door swung open and, with a gasp, the crowd parted. The polite young man stepped out onto the sidewalk with a satchel in one hand and an automatic pistol in the other.

"Halt where you are!" shouted Art Greenaway. "In the name of the law!"

The young man raised his pistol and fired a shot. Art Greenaway stumbled backwards a half-dozen steps and then crumpled to the pavement, bright red blood flowing from a hole in his shoulder.

"Oh no! Oh no!" Irv knelt beside his friend, who looked up at him with an expression of profound dismay.

"Lord, it hurts!" he gasped while Irv packed his handkerchief into the wound.

"You told me he was a dangerous man!" sneered a soft voice, and Irv looked up to see the polite young man standing above him.

"Damn you!" Trembling with grief and anger, Irv reached over to pick up Art's gun where it lay beside him on the pavement.

But the polite young man stepped on his hand. "I guess I can't trust you at my back," he hissed. "And I can't stand here all day." Slowly he raised his pistol until Irv was looking straight down the barrel. Carefully he thumbed the hammer back.

I am a dead man, thought Irv. He heard the sound of a shot being fired as if from a long way away. He waited for the impact of the lead slug.

But it was the young man, not Irv, who had been shot. His legs suddenly bent at the knees. His hand went limp, dropping his gun, and he sat down abruptly in the street, clutching his side with both hands.

Irv looked around. The fat man stood in the doorway of the marshal's office with his enormous pistol held out straight in front of him, held firmly in both hands. "He must be a detective after all," thought Irv.

The fat man stepped out into the street. Slowly, with his gun at the ready, he advanced towards the polite young man. And with each step he took, handcuffs jangled at his ankles.

"How did you get loose?" Irv asked him.

"You left my key ring on the desk. I used my handcuff key. They're all standard issue, fit every set of handcuffs in the nation."

"I didn't know that."

"I did, but I forgot," rasped Art Greenaway. The bleeding from his shoulder seemed to have stopped.

"Would someone call me a doctor, please," moaned the polite young man. Even the honor students at Cedar Grove High School couldn't have asked more politely. ●

The bank's computer had malfunctioned—or so they thought, until they discovered someone had purposely altered its memory!

To Forgive Is Human

by MEL WASHBURN

THE MERCHANTS AND FARMERS BANK WAS THE MOST important financial institution in Waupesaca, Minnesota. So when its president and chief officer called for official assistance, Irene Rasmussen chased her customers out, hung up a CLOSED sign in the window of *Irene's Cafe,* and, assuming a dignity worthy of the Town Magistrate, Waupesaca's only elected official, walked down the street and into the oak-panelled lobby of the red brick bank building.

"Mr. Moore is busy just now," said Miss Perkins, the grey-haired and cheerful bank secretary. "But I'm sure he'll see you as soon as he can."

"I'll wait," said Irene and went over to the cashier's window to pass the time with young Jeff Fairchild who, after only four years' residence in Waupesaca, was considered something of a newcomer.

Their conversation, however, had barely progressed beyond the topic of the weather when it was interrupted by the indistinct sounds of unbusinesslike shouting from inside the bank president's office. Two men's voices—one deep and booming, the other high and sharp—grew louder and louder, as if in argument. "Sounds like Nathan Moore and Frank Burlew are at it again," commented Irene.

Miss Perkins smiled in agreement. "Mr. Moore's been on the phone

all morning, very angry. And Frank just came in to see him, looking like the cat that swallowed the canary."

THE BUSINESS RIVALRY BETWEEN THE TWO MEN WAS A long-standing joke in the town. For nearly thirty years the two of them had speculated in timber, real estate, minerals, and every other commodity in northern Minnesota. Sometimes they bid against each other; sometimes they joined in uneasy partnership; and always they bickered, each claiming to have outmaneuvered and outsmarted the other, though in recent years, it seemed to Irene, Mr. Moore had clearly gotten the better end of things. She knew from her stewardship of the township tax rolls that Frank Burlew's holdings had shrunk considerably while Mr. Moore had prospered in the development of vacation homes, a marina, and a laundromat.

But now, she could hear, it was Frank Burlew who seemed to be crowing with satisfaction while Mr. Moore carped and complained: though she couldn't make out their words, the tone of their voices coming from the next room was clear enough. And when the office door at last swung open and Mr. Burlew—tall, sturdy, and pink-complexioned—came out, he was calling over his shoulder, "A great pleasure doing business with you, Nathan!" and laughing heartily. Then he gave a cheery good morning to Irene and the others and left the bank.

Irene entered the president's office to find the wizened Nathan Moore seated behind his big desk, his face buried in his hands. She closed the door quietly. "What's the trouble, Nathan?"

Grey-faced and trembling, the little man looked up. "The matter is that I've been cheated. Robbed practically. By the man who just left here and his accomplice."

"That's a serious charge, Nathan."

"I don't make it lightly. Frank Burlew and I have done business for years: he's always been a sharp operator, but I've never before known him to be underhanded." He explained that Frank Burlew had gone deeply into debt recently over a number of unsuccessful transactions, borrowing against his real estate holdings to do so. The most valuable of these properties was now the old Burlew homestead, a played-out dairy farm when Frank had mortgaged it to the bank five years ago, but now an invaluable resource because of the recent discovery of rich mineral deposits beneath its exhausted soil. "A big New York mining concern wanted to buy the mineral rights for a healthy sum, and I was going to sell them."

"*You* were? But I thought Frank Burlew owned them."

Mr. Moore smiled drily. "And so Frank thought too, until the day before yesterday, when the bank sent him a foreclosure notice. You see, he'd mortgaged the mineral rights separately from the land, and the note on those rights came due the first of this month, a fact he'd apparently forgotten about. I waited the required week—today's the ninth—and then foreclosed." He laughed silently and rubbed his hands together. "I had Frank right where I wanted him." Then his face collapsed into a grimace of misery. "But our bank's computer malfunctioned—or so I thought—and printed out a foreclosure notice dated the first of *next* month. This gave Frank all the warning he needed: yesterday he sold the rights to that New York outfit and today he came in to pay off the note. Drat!" He pounded a gnarled fist on the desktop. "I called my lawyer yesterday when I found out about the misdated notice, but he said there's nothing I can do: that notice is a lawful instrument, and Frank's sale of the rights is perfectly legal."

INWARDLY, IRENE FELT LIKE CONGRATULATING FRANK Burlew for escaping financial ruin, but outwardly she tried to appear sympathetic. "This is all very upsetting, Nathan, but what can I do to help you?"

He leaned forward angrily. "You can do your duty as town magistrate by arresting my cashier, Jeff Fairchild, for fraud and malfeasance."

Irene was shocked. "Why, whatever do you mean?"

"Just this: my computer was tampered with. This morning I called the computer center in St. Paul—we only have the terminals here and rent time on a large computer in the Twin Cities—I called and complained. They made a check, however, and discovered that the computer's memory had been deliberately altered, setting back by one month the due date on the loan."

"I understand. But how does that fact incriminate Jeff Fairchild?"

Nathan Moore raised one finger. "First, only two people in town besides myself have access to our computer: Jeff and Miss Perkins." He raised another finger. "Miss Perkins has been a loyal employee for over seventeen years." He raised a third bony finger, but Irene interrupted him.

"Wait a moment, Nathan. Let me correct you on an important point. I studied in a basic computer course with the university extension last year, where I learned, among other things, that computer terminals like yours are connected to the main computers along standard telephone lines. Anyone with the proper know-how and a lot of determination could connect a home computer to his telephone and get

into your computer's memory. So you can't say only two people had access."

Nathan smiled grimly. "I was coming to point three, motive. I have just learned from Frank Burlew's own lips that Jeff Fairchild intends to marry Frank's daughter, Peg. They've been keeping it quiet—afraid, I suppose, that I'd fire young Jeff if I found out. But now that he's solvent again, Frank thinks he can flaunt their secret in my face."

Irene's eyes widened. "Well! This is the first engagement in this town for twenty years that I haven't known about almost before the young couple themselves did."

"They've been sneaky, all right. But I mean to have justice in the end."

"Justice? You mean revenge."

"Call it what you will, I want Jeff arrested."

Irene stroked her chin thoughtfully. "Give me an hour to work on this, Nathan. I believe I can give you satisfaction on this whole matter."

AND FORTY-SEVEN MINUTES LATER, IN RESPONSE TO A call from Irene, Nathan Moore walked down the street from his bank to her cafe and entered through the front door, which still displayed a CLOSED sign.

The place was deserted except for Irene and one other woman, a beautiful, intelligent-looking girl with a healthy, pink complexion: Frank Burlew's daughter.

"What are you doing here?" Nathan scowled at her.

"Peggy has something to tell you, Nathan."

The girl's lower lip trembled. "Yes I have, Mr. Moore. It was I who sabotaged your computer." Her voice was close to tears. "I learned the details of your operation from Jeff, just by asking him random questions now and then, but he never . . . " Round tears glistened on her cheeks. "He's an honest man. So is my father. But I was tired of hiding our engagement, so . . . I only . . . They'd be so angry . . . " She began sobbing uncontrollably. "I'm so ashamed."

"There, there, my girl, please don't worry," stammered old Nathan Moore. "This whole affair can be our secret." He patted her shoulder awkwardly. "All is forgiven."

She looked up hopefully. "Do you really mean it?"

"Yes I do. But you must promise never to do anything like this again."

"Oh I never will." She hugged him gratefully, and then with many tearful thanks she went home.

"That was very decent of you, Nathan," said Irene approvingly.

The old man colored slightly. "Well, I'm not made entirely of flint, Irene. But tell me, how did you know it was Peggy who tampered with our computer?"

Irene held up three chubby fingers, and ticked them off one by one. "I just couldn't believe Jeff would do such a thing to his own employer: to a business rival, maybe he would, but not to his employer—it was just too unscrupulous. And then Frank Burlew, for whom scruples wouldn't be a problem, simply doesn't know enough about computers: he's just an old-fashioned northwoodsman." She was down to the last finger. "In those computer classes I took last year, there was only one other student from this town."

"Peggy?"

Irene nodded. "The girl's a whiz with those machines. You should hire her for your bank some day." ●

MYSTERY MINIQUIZ

Who was Bruce Wayne's (Batman's) butler?

One of the few people who knew his secret identity was Alfred, his butler.

Who went ape in a one-sided and hairy romance with Ann Darrow?

King Kong, in the 1933 movie of the same name.

What was the name of The Girl from U.N.C.L.E.?

The TV series starred Stefanie Powers as April Dancer.

What kind of weapon is a BAR?

The letters stand for the Browning Automatic Rifle.

Only one private detective could solve this perplexing problem—Sherlock Holmes II, that's who!

The Curious Case of the Dead-Drunk Driver

by RICHARD E. GIVAN

IT WAS A DARK AND STORMY NIGHT. I WAS WORKING THE night watch out of traffic. Suddenly the Motorola crackled to life, spitting those words into my face that I always dreaded, "Injury accident. Rumpole Lane, at the intersection with Peephole's Court."

"Unit twelve responding," I said, my voice flat but my innards twisted.

Siren screaming, I took the hairpin on Rumpole on two wheels. It was probably for the best, since I was riding my Harley at the time. Soon, I reached the wreckage.

The scene reeked of alcohol and criminal negligence. A Pinto lay on its top in the center of the road, one wheel making lazy circles. Two dazed kids crawled through the glass shards with the stupid look of unbelieving survivors. Standing guard over them was the other car—a Buick looking a little like a simonized Sherman tank. Any fool could see the Buick had rear-ended the kids while they waited for the stoplight. I saw it right off.

Waiting for the ambulance, I butterflied and band-aided the kids. Shaken, battered, and bruised, they were still sucking air. Maybe the next kids wouldn't be so lucky.

The man in the Buick wasn't feeling any pain. His breath could have fumigated the Super Bowl. His eyes were covered with more glaze than a dozen Krispy-Kremes. His speech made Foster Brooks sound like Alistair Cooke. His tie was caught in the zipper of his fly. I began to suspect that he'd been drinking.

He wobbled over to the cruiser for the report. "Guessh I did a boo-boo, huh?" he said with a broad wink, just before throwing up in my lap. I keenly examined the lapful of slop. At a rough guess, about eight whiskey sours, heavy on the sour. Then, I threw up in his.

It was probably a good thing that the butt of my .357 was temporarily too slippery for my quick draw. I gave up and settled for my next choice. "You're under arrest," I said through tight lips, "for driving while intoxicated."

YOU EVER HAD A JUDGE SHOOT YOU A GLANCE THAT could wither concrete? There I was, a couple of weeks later, at a suppression hearing. The defendant was pin-striped and, well, sober as a judge. I was all red-face and mumbles while the judge chewed me out for making an illegal arrest. He preached something about the misdemeanor presence rule and told me not to come back into his courtroom again without a solid bust. I'd walked in ready to high-five the man for helping to rid the highways of a menace. I skulked out of the courtroom flashing a completely different sign. Lucky for him my hand was under my hat.

Where is the justice? Guilty, GUILTY people walk away from wrecks they cause because they are bombed out of their skulls. Yet, when the police officers arrive on the scene, they are legally barred from making an arrest for drunk driving. Not because of insufficient evidence of drunkenness. But because the driving element of the offense was not performed in their presence. And in most states, an officer can not legally make an arrest based upon probable cause for a misdeameanor or a violation like DWI.

Just as some fish rise to the bait, some men rise to the challenge. I heard a distant call of clarions. A burning presence rose in my chest. I had to do something! A hole mission beckoned! I knelt down right there in front of the County Court Clerk's Office and swore on my citation book that I would neither swerve nor falter from my quest to resolve this thorny knot of legal irony.

About an hour later, after I'd found my way out of the courthouse and bought a roll of Tums, I faced the facts. I needed help. Someone with an agile mind and brilliant deductive powers. Who could help me? A sudden inspiration! Perhaps that legendary detective, Sherlock Holmes had left some descendants! Yoiks, the game was on!

It was a short game. The latest issue of *Startling Detective Stories* was waiting in my mailbox. Thumbing through the classifieds, I spotted an ad for the services of one Sherlock Holmes II. I wired him a retainer and settled back to wait.

I RECOGNIZED HIM THE MOMENT HE TRIPPED COMING down the Trailway's steps and spilled into the gutter. Helping him up, I introduced myself. Regal carriage, ball-bearing eyes, fish-bowl forehead, he stared coolly past the rapidly scabbing spot on his hawk-like nose and replied, "Holmes, sir, at your service."

Boy, were we a team. As soon as I was done with afternoon school-crossing duty, I brought Holmes home to my Airstream. We went to work.

I explained my problem—the state's problem, that is. Holmes took his long, thin fingers from the bean dip and cradled his bony chin. "I think I understand. You upstarts here in the colonies adopted our common law rule prohibiting a warrantless misdemeanor arrest except when the offense is committed in the presence of the officer."

"Right," I said. "And I want you to deduct us a solution. Some way to make it legal to arrest those drinking and driving rascals."

"This is a peach of a problem. Perhaps we need help." He brightened. "I happen to have some relatives who might be available. How much money did you say you have?"

"Gee, Mr. Holmes, I kinda hoped we could crack it between us. Who did you have in mind?"

"Well, I've a cousin with international connections. He's from Greece. His name is Hemlock Holmes."

I was disappointed, but I didn't want to offend the world famous detective. "Well, I don't know."

"Or, if we need to resort to subterfuge, I've a cousin adept at, as you Yanks call it, black bag jobs."

"You do?" I gasped.

"Yes—Pick Lock Holmes. Or, should it become necessary to delve into the black arts, there's always Warlock Holmes."

"I don't know. All these people sound expensive."

"Well, there is an American cousin who runs a pig farm not far from here—Hamhock Holmes."

"But, I'm just a simple police officer. I've spent all my savings on your fee."

He smiled and plucked a tidy white card from the brim of his deerstalker. I looked at the print. It offered personal loans at EZ rates. The name at the bottom was Shylock Holmes. That was the final straw! I put my foot down. On the Doritos. "Now listen here! I paid you a lot of money for your help, and I expect a solution for my money!"

He had the good grace to blush under the fog shrouding his gaunt cheeks. "Quite right. It's the detecting business, you see. Bit of a depression the last fifty years."

He drew himself erect as if to make a pronouncement. "I believe that I have your solution at hand. This is an obvious case of the need for legislative correction."

"Say what?"

"Your state legislature, my boy. They simply pass a new law. Apply pressure to your state legislatures to exempt drunk driving from the misdemeanor presence rule. There is already precedent for some misdemeanors like shoplifting and domestic abuse. Times change and there is no reason the law shouldn't change to reflect new needs."

"Eureka!" I shouted. "That's the answer! I'm going to begin lobbying right away."

"By George, I think he's got it," said Holmes, whipping his cape over his shoulders and heading for the door.

I drove my friend to a good hitch-hiking spot down at the on-ramp. "Just one thing puzzles me, Mr. Holmes. I've read every adventure of your grandfather several times, but I never read of his taking a wife. Who was your father—Sherlock's son?"

Mr. Holmes looked at me sharply, then seemed to soften. "I suppose you have a right to know," he said wistfully. "Grandfather was never much for the obeyance of mundane domestic technicalities. Which is to say he never actually married grandmother. And my dear father could never forget it. My father's name? It was Out-of-Wedlock Holmes."

There was a lot of confusion at the airline terminal, but that didn't faze her. She had her knitting to attend to!

Knit Lady

by ARDATH MAYHAR

SHE CHECKED HER SINGLE OVERFULL BAG, WATCHING the girl at the airport counter as if expecting her to take off with the thing trailing old-lady-unmentionables behind. When it was gone irretrievably into that mystery where bags go and from which they (usually) return, she gathered up her shiny black purse and her knitting bag and fussed over to one of the couches along the wall. Once settled there, she took a formidable mass of knitting from the bag, something scarlet that trailed an umbilicus back into the bowels of the plastic container. The click of her needles seemed to soothe her, and she dropped into that almost hypnotic state that seems to overtake ladies of a certain age when their hands are engaged and their minds temporarily out of gear.

The waiting room was quiet—the terminal was a small one near a modest sized city whose only recent claim to fame was the visit of a

notable judge. That very week, in fact. The incoming flight for which the knitting lady waited would bear Life-Sentence Longworth back to his duties in the more prominent centers of the country. There were even a few protesters waiting outside to give him a parting jeer. He was famous for putting drug pushers behind bars, as well as for imposing stiff sentences on serious wrongdoers.

The clock on the wall above the desk hiccupped slightly at each forward surge of the minute-hand, but the lady didn't notice that. It was only when the party with the judge in tow arrived that she roused a bit and tucked her scarlet octopus-sweater back into its bag.

He had been drinking a bit. The judge's normal high color was elevated a bit more than usual; anyone who knew him could tell that. The knit lady noted it at once, and her smile was less vague than it had been.

She put her purse into the knitting bag, the bag on her arm, and made for the long dark hall leading to the rest rooms. There was nobody in the ladies' room, which was excellent. She perched on the stool before the wide mirror and waited some more. Reaching into her knitting bag, she took out a square of monogrammed linen and examined it idly. C.M. was embroidered immaculately in one corner.

Those were not her initials, and she had never carried a handkerchief of such quality in her life.

After a bit she lifted her head and listened. Steps in the hall. She fumbled in her purse as if looking for a prescription or some such, but the steps passed her door and turned in at the men's room, just adjacent. And she knew quite certainly that nobody else had gone into it.

She checked herself in the mirror. Vague eyes, sweet, somewhat absent smile. Just right. She trundled her portly figure out of her own door and into the next, an exclamation of shocked apology already on her lips—and one of her metal knitting needles in her hand.

It was Longworth who had gone in. She could see the top of his white pompadour above the screen dividing the room. She dashed around the end and thrust the needle expertly through his back, between two ribs, and through his heart. Just as quickly she withdrew it and wiped the needle on that handkerchief from her bag. She dropped the bloody handkerchief, then she made her way out of the room and into the corridor. Nobody was either coming or going.

She wandered back into the waiting room, found her chair occupied, and glared at its occupant until he began to fidget. At last he gave it up and rose. She darted into the seat, took out her knitting, and began to work at a great rate, after quietly threading one needle back into the

empty loops. Nobody noticed. Nobody ever notices elderly ladies who knit.

The clock hiccupped onward, and in a bit someone in the farewell party said, "The judge is taking a long time. You don't think he might be sick, do you?"

The local DA frowned. "I'd better go look. He's probably all right, but he isn't all that young. Be right back."

He was, indeed. There was a tumult of loud talk and brow-wiping. In the midst of the excitement the plane arrived, and the knitting lady took up her workbag, her purse, and herself and wandered vaguely out onto the apron.

She found the pilot very helpful. He double-checked her ticket to make certain she was about to go north instead of south, and he helped her up the steps into the small passenger plane.

His other scheduled passenger was missing, and there was such confusion in the terminal that he could hardly attend to the necessary business, but he managed. Meanwhile the old lady sat knitting and watching the young couple who had flown in from Houston and the little girl who kept nagging her mother to get out and buy candy for her.

When they took off, she didn't even heave a sigh of relief. One doesn't when one is at the top of one's profession. And the Knit Lady was all of that. ●

The infamous "Authoress of Death" has returned! What's an editor to do?

The Prison Letters

by VICKI SHAULL CARLETON

Dear Charlie:

I have a great story for you. Mike Shayne Magazine is such an inspiration. After all if it weren't for the hack writers that you continue to buy from, an author such as myself wouldn't stand a chance.

Enclosed is my latest manuscript, "The Prison Letters," which is destined to be a classic. I sincerely hope that your chauvinistic attitude towards women writers has changed, Charlie my boy. Incidentally, I never thanked you properly for my internment did I?

Yours truly,
Vicki Carleton

Dear Ms. Carleton:

Your letter reached me upon my return from a writer's conference. I don't know how you managed to be released from prison, but I assure you I have no intention of being manipulated into purchasing another manuscript from you regardless of its merit.

I strongly advise you to see a qualified psychiatrist at your earliest convenience. However, in all fairness your manuscript does have possibilities once it is reworked so I suggest you submit it elsewhere.

Sincerely,
CEF

Dear Ms. Carleton:

You have exhausted my patience. I have turned over your letters to the police and though you are using a Post Office Box I can assure you they have some solid leads as to your whereabouts.

What a pity you have not profited from your experience in prison. I once published a story from an ex-con and it was well crafted. The response was overwhelming. As long as you persist with this attitude towards editors and the competition, your future as a writer is, at best, a pipe dream.

It is only out of the kindness of my heart that I continue to respond to your letters. I have always been for prison reform.

Sincerely,
CEF

Dear Chuck:

I am sorry that it has taken me several months to answer your latest letter. It isn't your fault that your letter only reached me a week ago is it?

Rumor has it that someone ransacked your offices and confiscated every manuscript you've received in the last six months. I can't imagine why anyone would want them, but now you can reconsider my manuscript and return Mike Shayne to the vital publication it once was.

I have written several sequels all for your consideraiton, dear editor, and am allowing you the honor of publishing them.

It would be unfortunate if I were to tell your wife what really goes on in your office after closing, wouldn't it?

Yours Truly,
Vicki Carleton

Dear Ms. Carleton:

It is impossible to continue this correspondence. I am currently in the hospital recuperating from a concussion. There is no doubt in my mind that you or your acquaintance had something to do with this latest perpetration. Mike Shayne has decided to take this case off my hands and be advised that he's the best in the business!

I regret the loss of your manuscript. Perhaps it was mistaken for scrap paper.

Sincerely,
Charles Fritch

Dear Charlie:

As usual your judgment of my abilities as a writer are prejudicial. Haven't you heard of the cliche "Forgive and forget"?

I have no intention of rewriting "The Prison Letters." However, I have written a letter concerning your insulting attitude towards me to your publishers and the editors of every current mystery magazine.

I implore you to reconsider. Some of my former cellmates would like to defend my honor against people like you. They are much more successful in reaching their goals than I could ever hope to be.

Yours Truly,
Vicki Carleton

Dear Mr. Fritch:

What a mistake you've made in not taking me seriously. Another manuscript is on its way to your office. I'm positive that your associate editor will have the wisdom to publish it in your absence. I can be a formidable opponent and will not rest until my work is given the respect it is due.

Unless you remove Mike Shayne from the case you can expect your family to meet a similar fate.

Well, I must go. I am expecting a visitor. How is the hospital fixed for security?

Yours Truly,
Vicki Carleton

Dear Ms. Carleton:

Thank you for your manuscripts. Unfortunately they do not meet my needs at the present time. Our editor will be returning to work next week. I cannot consider publishing any stories unless I have his authorization. Sorry.

I appreciate the compliments, but as I said, Mr. Fritch will be back at his desk and it is his decision.

Yours,
R.A. Brown

Memo to Mike Shayne:

You never cease to amaze me. How on earth did you know Ms. Carleton would be waiting for me when I returned home? I still can't fathom how she learned where I live, but I am eternally grateful that you had the insight to realize she'd make another attempt on my life. I

am sorry that she was killed and I know you tried to revive her. My apologies for complicating the situation by refusing to not get involved. She could have been a successful writer once rehabilitated. Oh well, once again I appreciate your assistance.

Regards,
CEF

Dear Mr. Fritch:

You have an exceptional publication. I've spent many hours curled up with the latest Mike Shayne and thoroughly enjoy each and every issue.

The enclosed is my first attempt at fiction. I hope you will consider it for publication.

We have a mutual acquaintance. Isn't that a coincidence? Though it has been over a year since her death, I'm sure you remember my twin sister Vicki. I hope to hear from you soon.

Warmest Regards,
Nicky Carleton

SECRET MESSAGE

Attention, Mike Shayne Mystery Club Members! The code word is MIKE, because this message contains a secret Mike Shayne has never told anyone before.

MSAK RATL FHAS DMYN ADMS NAVA
RTOJ EMNY ONAI ABORA

We wanted you to be the first to know!

Mike's Mail

NO SCHLOCK

Normally I wouldn't write, but since you asked—I read two other mystery mags each month, so will try not to get confused.

I enjoy reading Mike Shayne, also Creasey, Ford, Christie, etc. I especially enjoy running into *good* characters (not Schlock) again, as Cathy Carruthers, old teachers, doctors, policemen, and just *characters* who solve mysteries. I enjoy a touch of romance occasionally as long as it is not indecent and does not interfere with the plot. I believe you are usually within the boundaries on this.

A person who can write well should have a good enough command of the English language to refrain from profanity. I will not stop reading a story because of an occasional "Damn!" but I am offended by the use

of street language and the improper use of the Titles of Divinity. I have been known to destroy a paperback for this.

A few of the stories in your mag in the past months have been offensive in this. These were not stories you have written. Some of the stories you choose are rather weird. Occasionally ok, but too weird is boring. (Believe it or not!)

Presume you will have many answers and wanted to cast my vote. Thanks.

Mary Collins
136 McKee
Manistee, Michigan 49660

You're welcome. And thank you for the letter. I do wish you (and others) would be more specific. Just saying some stories are weird doesn't tell me what stories you have in mind. One person's weird is another person's not-so-weird!

SUNSET PLUNGE

I wonder whether Mike Shayne's stories are being ghosted? My reason for the wonderment can be found in the April issue, page 5, lines 10 and 11.

That thing is, if anyone is watching "the sun plunge into the ocean (at sunSET time)" while relaxing or whatever in or on Miami Beach, some kind of miracle would have to have taken place, and the entire Miami/Miami Beach area must have been picked up bodily and moved to the WEST coast of Florida. Sunrises may be seen (in which case, the sun appears to RISE out of the ocean) from any beach on the Gold Coast. But sunsets . . . uh-uh.

Being a writer myself, I suggest the ghost, if such there be, perk up on his research.

Vickie Varnum
114 Edmund Road
W. Hollywood, FL 33023

I was recently chatting on the phone with Brett Halliday (who does not live in Florida but occasionally visits there) and mentioned your letter to him. He said he didn't remember the scene, but you're probably right about the sunset. He also expressed amazement that

readers comment so enthusiastically on small errors that really have nothing to do with the story. You believe in ghosts? Now that's spooky!

VOTES FOR THE REV.

We vote for the Rev.

F. Branson
Branson, Missouri

I place my vote with Rev. Hinshaw.

Chris Tilghman
P.O. Box 836
Rockaway Beach, Missouri 65740

My family votes with Rev. Hinshaw. We all read the magazine and would like to be able to continue. The 1980's need this so there will be suitable reading material.

Carmine Jones
Forsyth, Missouri

There have been several letters on this very thing printed in your book; doesn't this tell you something? On TV shows one letter represents 60,000 people. How many does it represent at MSMM?

Ethel Fine
Branson, Missouri

My thirteen year old reads this book. My grandfather reads it. I read it, age 30. What good all around coverage of age can you get better? Keep it clean. A weirdo will read clean books, but the normal won't read weird ones.

Thellsea Surber (?)
Walnut Shade, Missouri

I vote with Rev Hinshaw.

Mrs. Jess Crouch
Rt 1 Box 388
Lonoke, Arkansas 72086

I vote with Rev. Hinshaw.

Mrs. Victoria Tilghman
Rt 1, Box 387
Lonoke, Arkansas 72086

10-1 I bet will be for keeping MSMM clean. Count us in with the Rev.

Jim Tilghman
Jacksonville, Arkansas

Rev. Hinshaw is right and if you won't buy junk, the writers will write what you buy.

Donna Baker
Bayou Lake Apts.
Pine Bluff, Arkansas 71603

For those of you who don't know what this is all about: in our April 1984 issue we ran a letter from Rev. D.C. Hinshaw, who said he enjoyed MSMM but he thought some of the stories were too weird, with too much supernatural, sex, foul language, etc.

Okay, so now we've heard from the good folks in Missouri and Arkansas. Anybody else got any comments?

CORNY CAMP?

I read "Yesterday's Hero." [MSMM, May 1984] It was entertaining and thoughtful. It is corny around here in Nebraska. In the sixties I liked "camp." Seeing that third rate dick in that campy situation getting confused is corny, but perhaps is this next year's crop. May the force be with you.

Charles E. Warner, Jr.
2207 Jones St.
Omaha, Nebraska 68102

P.S. I liked the size of the story.

BEST BY MAIL

For rates, write National Classified, Box 5, Sarasota, Fla. 33578

OF INTEREST TO ALL

COMPUTER user group directories now available for Apple, Atari, IBM-PC, TRS-80, and many more!! Our catalog has more info. Send $2.00 to: Business Application Systems, 1734 Barry Ave., L.A., Ca. 90025

FURNITURE refinishing simplified — as a career or hobby. Send $4.95 +50¢ postage. Shar-Ray Enterprises, D-11 3295 E. McDowell Rd., Phoenix, Az. 85008

BECOME Bounty Hunter/Bailbond Investigator. Huge rewards. For information write: Bail USA, 8 College Ave., Greenville, Pa. 16125

MAKE And Save Money With Top Quality Sporting goods. 18 or older, company policy. No selling products, no gimmicks, legitimate business. For details, send $5.75 to: Doug Herman, P.O. Box 10506, Tallahassee, Fl. 32302

REAL Health For Lifetime. Dr. Ana Aslan the real GH3. Information package, $1. Asperger, 680(X) Rosita, Los Altos, Ca. 94022

LOTTERIES & SWEEPSTAKES

LOTTO-WIN System information, stamped envelope: Box 391, Murrysville, Pa. 15668

BOOKS & CATALOGS

OUT-OF-PRINT western paperbacks, hardcovers, and magazines. Free catalogs. Pandora's Books, Box (H)54, Neche, ND 58265

MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES

INCREDIBLE Money-Making Plan. Only $5.00. Harrison Co., POB 50334, Tulsa, Ok. 74150

MAKE $100 a day! Fast. Easy. This plan, directions and six other money-making formulas for $1. Keenco, Box 1817(MS), Pontiac, Mi. 48056

FREE Information starting your own profitable business. SASE: King's, Box 504(P), Pilot Point, Tx. 76258

PERSONAL - MISCELLANEOUS

FRIENDSHIP, Marriage, worldwide. Free photos! Hermes-Verlag, Bx 110660/C, Berlin 11, W. Germany

MEET that special lady. Free details. IFC, Box 238(SN), Colonial Hghts., Va. 23834

JAPANESE Girls make wonderful wives. Let us introduce you to an unspoiled Oriental Beauty. $3. brings photos, descriptions, application. Japan International, Box 1027(MS), Orangevale, Ca. 95662

ORIENTAL gentle women want you! Marriage, friendship. Details, $1.00. Postal, Box 398475(MS), Miami, Fl. 33139

FREE Singles' Correspondence Magazine. Hotline, 720(MS) Morrow, Clayton, NJ 08312

NEED Friends? Nationwide introductions. Club, Box 324, Ontario, Ca. 91761

SINGLES! "Direct-Contact" magazine, $3.00. Box 1457, Groton, Ct. 06340

MARKED PLAYING CARDS

Now you can get a marked deck of what looks like standard playing cards with carefully concealed secret marks. Only you can name any card after a quick glance at the back. You'll always be a winner in any card game or magic trick! It's like money in the bank. Send for yours today,only $10 postpaid. Satisfaction Guaranteed!

UNITED MARKETING & MANUFACTURING
323 S. Franklin Bldg., Dept U-73 (MS 08)
Chicago, IL 60606-7096

GET YOUR PIECE OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

The Yurika Foods Opportunity is something you can really sink your teeth into. A chance to be your own boss. Enjoy a better life. Increase your income. Be the success you know you can be. America offers you the free enterprise system. Yurika Foods offers you the products and the plan. All you have to do is help yourself. Just a few hours of your spare time could change your life.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State/Zip _____

Phone # _____

Send to: **M-L-ENTERPRISES**
8 November Walk(MS), Long Beach, NY 11561

An Independent Distributor of YURIKA FOODS

MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE is the best in the field. Featuring a complete Mike Shayne story in every issue, as well as short stories and novelettes by top mystery writers from all over the world, it's a reading treat you can't afford to miss. Right now, while you're in the mood, fill out the coupon below and send it with your check or money order, and we'll see that your favorite mystery magazine will be waiting in your mailbox every month earlier than you can find it on the newsstands. Allow 6-8 weeks for start.

CLIP OR COPY THIS COUPON:

RENOWN PUBLICATIONS, INC.
P.O. BOX 178
RESEDA, CA 91335

Enter my subscription to:
MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE
U.S. FUNDS ONLY

	U.S.A		CANADA		FOREIGN	
1 year	$18.00	☐	$21.00	☐	$24.00	☐
2 years	$32.00	☐	$38.00	☐	$40.00	☐

Please check correct box

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____
STATE _____ **ZIP** _____

Please print

UNICORN VIDEO

WE'RE BEING WATCHED!

NOW ONLY $59.95 ea.

VHS
BETA

P.O. BOX 1086 • RESEDA, CA 91335